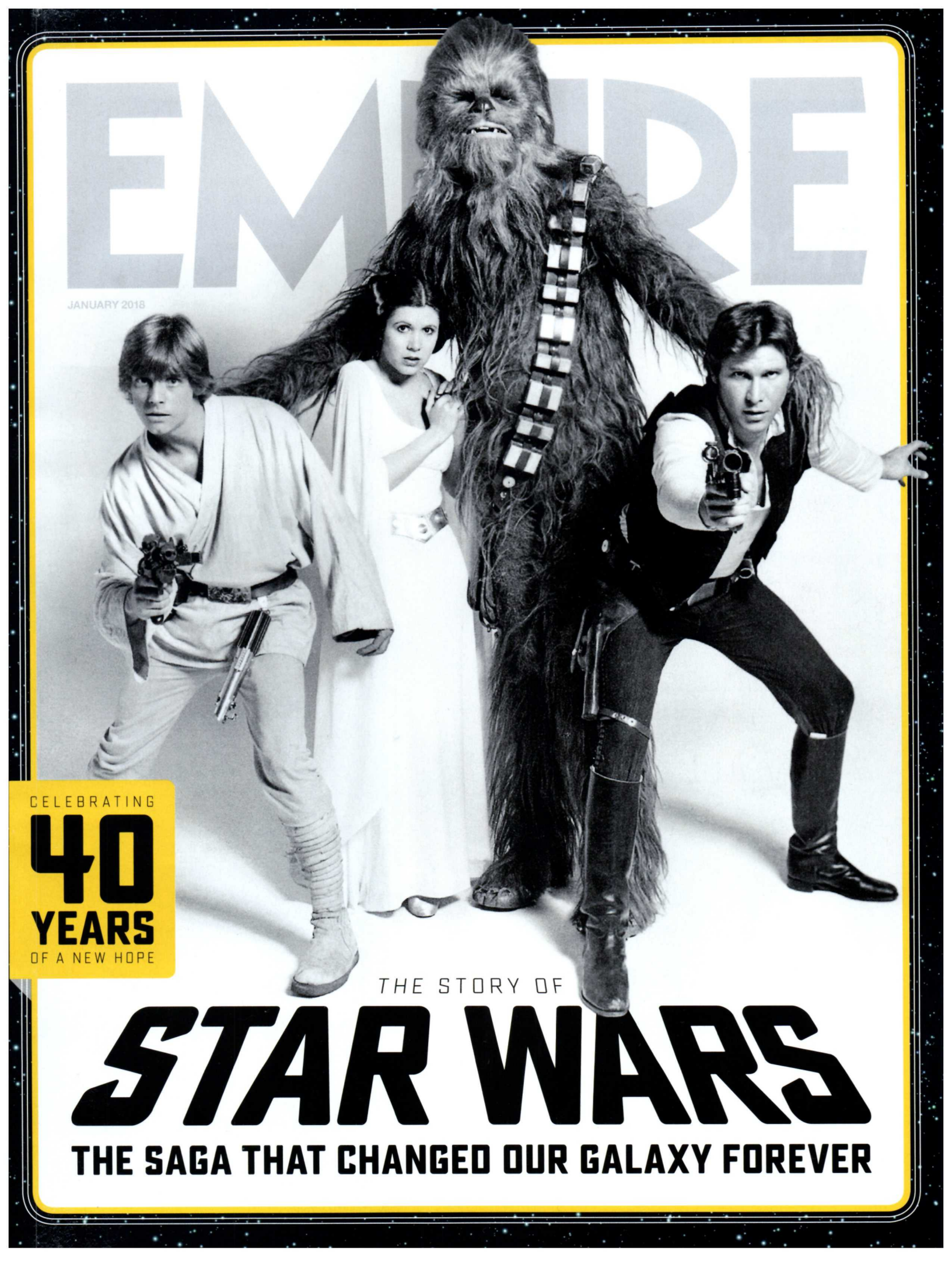
EMPIRE
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THE STORY OF
STAR WARS
THE SAGA THAT CHANGED OUR GALAXY FOREVER

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STAR WARS
THE LAST JEDI™

IN CINEMAS DECEMBER 14

EDITOR'S LETTER

I'M NOT OLD enough to have seen *Star Wars* on its original release. That, friends, is both a blessing and a curse. I still have my youth (um, kinda), but I missed out on one of the most undeniably extraordinary cinematic events of the 20th century. By the time I came to the films in the '80s, they had entrenched themselves in our culture (even in an old pit village): I'd seen the toys in the playground, T-shirts in the Spar, and my brother Graham had a Millennium Falcon (by God, that would be worth something now — GODDAMMIT GRAHAM). But despite all this, nothing could prepare me for the genuinely life-changing, absolutely soul-shaking experience that was seeing the films for the first time. Not in the right order in my case (*The Empire Strikes Back* was first for me), but it hardly mattered. My world had changed forever.

Empire's not old enough to have been there for the original release either. Not that you'd know it to go through our archive. Starting in earnest in 1997 with the release of the Special Editions, I don't know if any other magazine could rival *Empire*'s comprehensive coverage of anything and everything *Star Wars*. We've sifted through all those interviews, reviews, re-reviews (well, we couldn't keep that five-star *Attack Of The Clones* verdict) and features to bring you the very best from *Empire* over the last 28 years, some of it reprinted for the very first time. We agonised over what to include and what not to. Tough decisions had to be made. And thinking about some of the amazing stuff we had to leave out will probably keep me awake for the next 28 years.

It's an absolute joy to bring this special magazine to you. I hope you love it as much as I do. And remember: the Force will be with you. Always.

Terri.

TERRI WHITE
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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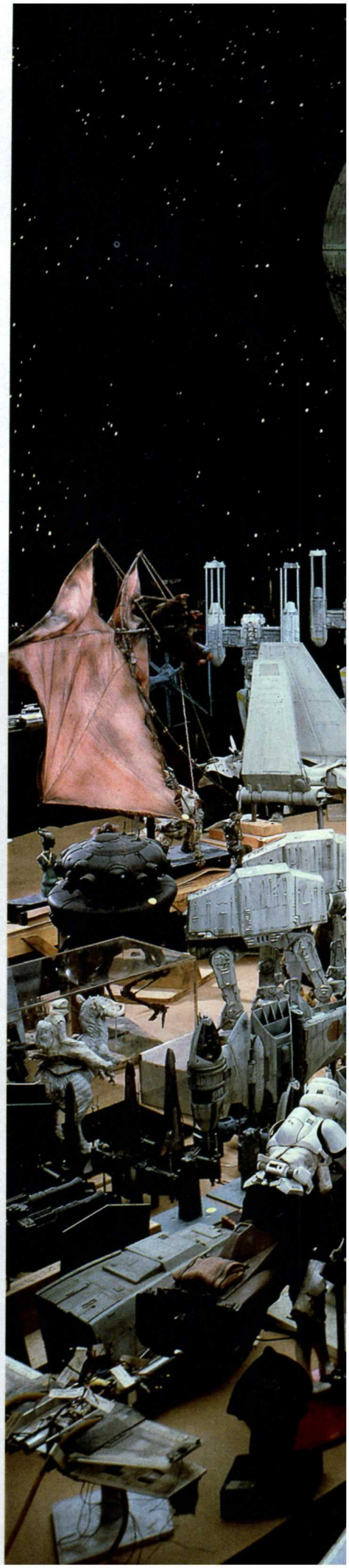

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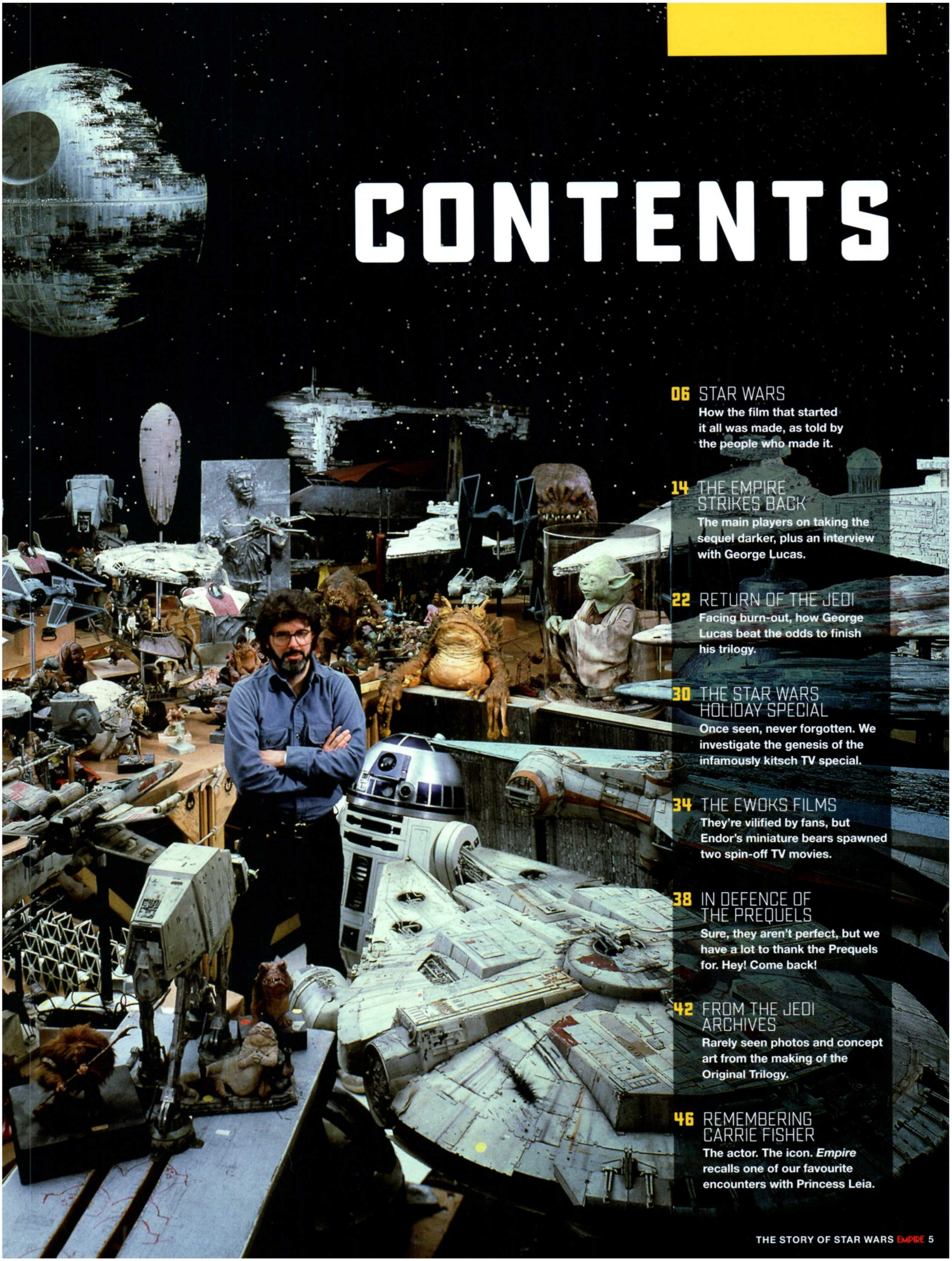


CONTENTS

06 STAR WARS
How the film that started it all was made, as told by the people who made it.

14 THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK
The main players on taking the sequel darker, plus an interview with George Lucas.

22 RETURN OF THE JEDI
Facing burn-out, how George Lucas beat the odds to finish his trilogy.

30 THE STAR WARS HOLIDAY SPECIAL
Once seen, never forgotten. We investigate the genesis of the infamously kitsch TV special.

34 THE EWOKS FILMS
They're vilified by fans, but Endor's miniature bears spawned two spin-off TV movies.

38 IN DEFENCE OF THE PREQUELS
Sure, they aren't perfect, but we have a lot to thank the Prequels for. Hey! Come back!

42 FROM THE JEDI ARCHIVES
Rarely seen photos and concept art from the making of the Original Trilogy.

46 REMEMBERING CARRIE FISHER
The actor. The icon. *Empire* recalls one of our favourite encounters with Princess Leia.

HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL

On its 20th anniversary, *Empire* asked the major players for their memories of making *A New Hope*, a film everyone thought would fail

ORIGINALLY APPEARED IN
EMPIRE NO.94
APRIL 1997

THE BIRTH

George Lucas (director): I was trying to make a modern mythology where you take the values and social mores that exist today and put them in a form that you can express to younger people. The film was aimed more at 12- and 13-year-olds than anyone else, though everyone of all ages seems to have enjoyed it.

Gary Kurtz (producer): It was part of a two-picture deal thing. *Star Wars* was the second part of it and it was based on a rough idea of a science-fiction story – it wasn't even called *Star Wars*. We wanted something which was like the 1930s *Flash Gordon* series. We even looked at buying the *Flash Gordon* rights – which were kind of expensive.

Alan Ladd Jr (then head of 20th Century Fox): I watched George Lucas' *American Graffiti*. I was knocked out by it, so we set up a meeting. When George came in, he told me about his *Star Wars* idea. And I liked it. Universal had an option on George's next film, but didn't want to do *Star Wars*. I said, "Great, let's develop it." Everybody thought I was crazy.

Jim Nelson (Industrial Light & Magic): Fox didn't want to make the movie if it couldn't be made for $8.7 million.

A new hero for a new generation, Mark Hamill as Luke Skywalker. **Left:** Carrie Fisher's Princess Leia — "the girl with big personality" — presses 'Rec' on R2-D2.

Eventually we got the budget to about $10.5 [million]. I said, "I don't know why we're arguing about $2.5 million. This movie will make $100 million!" Everybody laughed. I kind of embarrassed George in the meeting, who scooted down in his chair. He said he expected to make $35 million.

THE SCRIPT

Lucas: I sat down over a period of two years and wrote the screenplay. I did a lot of research, mostly in the area of mythology. I'm not sure Fox ever really understood it.
Mark Hamill (Luke Skywalker): I thought of it as a fairy tale. One of my favourite earlier versions of the screenplay started with a helicopter shot of an enchanted forest and the camera ends up going though a tree window where you see a mother Wookiee feeding a squealing baby Wookiee. To calm it down, she reaches over to a shelf and takes off a storybook entitled *Star Wars*. She opens the book and that's when the ship comes overhead. At the end we cut back to the forest to see the baby Wookiee asleep.
Kurtz: There were seven or eight drafts of the script. The characters changed but the main thrust of the story — that rousing adventure with the rescuing of the princess — had at one time been reversed: the girl was rescuing her older brother who was a captain. As it went along, it became apparent the treatment material was way too large to do as one film, so the idea was to pick the best part out of the middle and make it into a film. The idea of nine stories was a bit much to contemplate. It wasn't until *Star Wars* actually came out and was popular that we saw that the characters were strong enough to sustain over more movies.

THE CASTING

Kurtz: A decision was made early on to have a cast of unknowns plus someone to play the mentor, Obi-Wan Kenobi. Alec Guinness was top of the list, and it was fortunate he was in LA doing something else so we could get him a script. The idea was to have an open call — sending out information to agents telling them what we were looking for. George was keen on that way of casting — if you cast people who are like their character in real life, then you have an easier job because they're not acting but being a version of themselves. It was narrowed down to two groups of three and this particular group worked the best. When you're casting to type, you want people who enhance the character in the script. Harrison was a very easy choice because he is that character.
Paul Hirsch (lead editor): George was casting *Star Wars* at the same time that Brian De Palma was casting *Carrie*. They were looking for actors of about the same age, so they decided to cast together.
Hamill: I just went in and there were so many people, everyone got 10 to 15 minutes with George. He didn't tell you anything about it, he just said, "Tell me about yourself." I left, forgot all about it. Then I was sent six pages of dialogue. I couldn't figure out what kind of movie it was, it didn't really make sense. When I went again, I recognised Harrison from *American Graffiti* and I thought he was going to be the Flash Gordon guy and I must be his plucky assistant.
Carrie Fisher (Princess Leia): I went on a casting call for *Carrie*. De Palma could talk, and George Lucas could not — then. Now he can. So Brian was doing the casting for *Star Wars* for George. I auditioned with Harrison and Mark. They cast it as an ensemble. They were going for a girl who was either really good-looking or one with a big personality, and they went with the big personality thing.
David Prowse (Darth Vader): I get this call to go up to the 20th Century Fox offices. They introduced me to George Lucas and he said he'd like to offer me one of two parts. He said, "Well, the first one is a character called Chewbacca, he's like a hairy gorilla, on the side of the good guys." All I could think of was three months in a gorilla skin, so I said, "No thank you very much," and asked him

what the other part was. He said, "It's the big villain. This character called Darth Vader." So I said, "Oh bollocks, the villain's fine." He said, "I think you've made a very wise decision — nobody will ever forget Darth Vader."

Anthony Daniels (C-3PO): When I first met George in London, we chatted without much enthusiasm — that was until we started creating this character. I didn't really understand the script but I liked C-3PO.

Kenny Baker (R2-D2): I just went up to the offices to meet George Lucas. I don't think they knew what the film was going to be called then. They just saw me and said, "He'll do." That was it, really, because I was the right size to get inside the robot.

THE PREPARATION

Fisher: The hair was awful, awful — but memorable like many awful things are. But I was so frightened they'd fire me. I was told I'd have the job but I'd have to lose seven pounds. I only weighed around seven stone so I had to go to a fat farm.

Prowse: They showed me some artwork. He looked almost like a fly-type character. I didn't really know quite what they were going to end up with until I actually met the costume designer and he showed me what the character was going to look like. And that was the first time I found out it was going to be a masked part.

Hamill: Just as we were going into production, Fox executives were sending us memos like, "Why doesn't the Wookiee have any pants on?" Remember the scene where a Jawa comes up to Luke outside the Cantina and I sort of brush him away in disgust? That telegraphs to everyone the human/Jawa relationship, right? Fox wanted a line added like, "Oh, look, it's a Jawa, a member of a small band of scavenging desert rodents who search the land for metal." They wanted everything explained.

THE SHOOT

Harrison Ford (Han Solo): The crew just thought it was very unsophisticated. I mean, here's this seven-foot-tall man in a big, hairy suit. They referred to Chewie as 'The Dog'. You know, "Bring The Dog in." And George isn't the best at dealing with those human situations, to say the least.

Hamill: In Africa, we were following *Jesus Of Nazareth* — it seemed so odd to have this ancient architecture with these robots walking around and the locals thinking we were all out of our minds.

Fisher: It was fun, I was the only girl in an all-boy fantasy. It was like porno but I kept my clothes on, funny as they were, and they had to tape down my breasts because there's no lingerie in outer space.

Ford: There were times when I threatened to tie George up and make him repeat his own dialogue. I told him, "You can type this shit, but you sure can't say it." But I was wrong. It worked.

Lucas: R2 never operated. It was supposed to be remote control but it never worked. Eventually the art department just made a fibreglass mould of it, put it on a piece of wire and pulled it around the set.

Kurtz: There are several spots in the film where you see that we cut away early to stop him from running into the wall or something.

Hirsch: George spent hours on R2-D2's dialogue. He would say, "It's a boop not a beep. Go up here or down there."

Prowse: I spoke the lines through all three movies. I had to learn all the dialogue so all the other actors could work with me. When I did the first one, I kept on saying to George, "What about the voice of Vader?" because everything I said was coming out muffled, but he said that it was okay because they were going to re-record all the lines. I naturally thought they were going to use me and never gave it another thought.

Don Henderson (General Taggi): David Prowse went away and learnt his lines every night. But, of course, you couldn't see him speaking because he wore the mask so he really didn't need to say anything at all. We all thought, "Why the bloody hell does he bother?" You couldn't hear what he was saying. The only thing you could hear was when he'd forgotten his lines — clear as a bell you'd hear, "Oh fuck it, I've dried," in a soft Bristol accent.

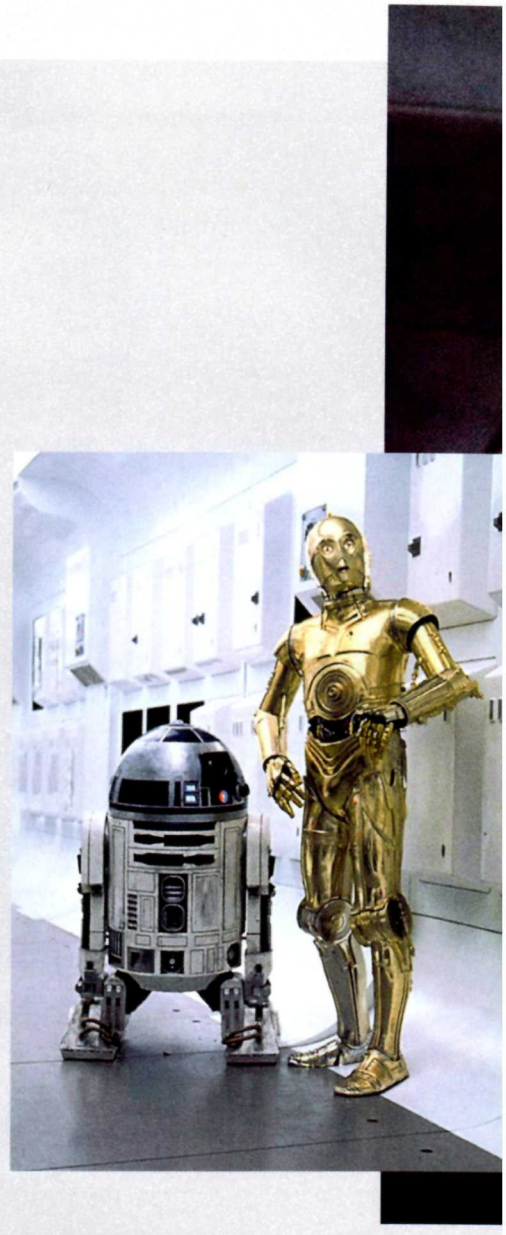
Hamill: None of the background artists knew who we were. I remember Harrison and I walking down to get our medals and these guys saying "wanker" under their breath and it really upset me. And Harrison was like, "Hey, who gives a shit? Forget about it." I don't like doing things in front of strangers.

Ford: This guy came to interview me from the BBC. I walked off a set at lunchtime and he said, "What's this picture all about?" And I sat there with this microphone in my face and realised I didn't know what the fucking picture was about.

Baker: Anthony Daniels was a strange lad. Nobody really got on with him. He's not that kind of guy. He's very remote and aloof. I never really mixed with him. Even when we were in a scene together, we never saw each other because I was in my little robot and he was in his and we couldn't communicate.

Daniels: Bits of me kept dropping off. If you freeze-frame, you can just see bits of arm coming off, or my leg dropping right down. In the sequence where Luke Skywalker hands C-3PO a towel, watch which bit he's drying.

Henderson: Most of my scenes were with Peter Cushing. On one of the sets, his boots didn't arrive but they were only shooting from the waist upwards, in any



Above left: Kenny Baker and Anthony Daniels *were* the droids George Lucas was looking for.
Main: Harrison Ford as Han Solo: "The BBC interviewed me. I had no idea what the picture was about."
Left: Alec Guinness was top of the casting list for Obi-Wan.

case. They found a pair of woman's bedroom slippers with red pom-poms, so he wore those instead. We're in the scene with him and he's stomping about being very evil and trying to be serious. And out of the corner of our eye we can see these red pom-poms.

THE DIRECTOR

Fisher: He hardly said anything. Nothing. People would visit the set for three days, reporters or whatever. After three days, someone said, "Which one's the director?"
Hamill: George gets very depressed when he makes movies. He's always convinced that once and for all he'll be exposed as having no talent. And he gets so disappointed with the finished product. In your mind everything is perfect, but when you finally have to realise it on film, it's never the same. He once told me he was 40 to 50 per cent satisfied with *American Graffiti* and 20 per cent satisfied with *Star Wars*.
Baker: Oh, he was very good. He was very quiet, but he knew exactly what he wanted. Great to work with, and so was Irvin Kershner [director of *The Empire Strikes Back*]. I wasn't crazy about Richard Marquand [director of *Return Of The Jedi*].
Hamill: He doesn't want to philosophise. He doesn't want to hear about your backstory even though he may have written it. I pestered him unmercifully on the first one. "Where is my dad? Where is my mum?" And George is like, "Shut up, you find it out later."
Kurtz: He likes to work solitarily in the cutting room and on the writing process. Working with actors and a big crew is not his thing. The fact that he didn't talk to the actors much was a big joke among them a lot of the time. He is not that kind of director. It's not his style to go out with actors and be philosophical about character. If it's going okay, he's not going to say much.

THE SPECIAL EFFECTS

Lucas: There wasn't anybody around who had the skill to do this sort of thing. So we hired a lot of kids out of school. The average age at ILM was 23 or 24, and they didn't have the production management skills. I started bringing in production people to oversee things, and that didn't go well, either.
Ben Burtt (special dialogue and sound effects): I was hired by Gary Kurtz and George Lucas to develop sounds for a movie called 'The Star Wars'. I was given about a year just to roam around with a tape recorder and a microphone and develop sounds for the movie before it had actually been filmed. The original soundtracks for *Star Wars* were groundbreaking.
Bruce Nicholson (optical camera assistant): Industrial Light & Magic was really a bunch of hippies for the most part ›

who were still wet behind their ears, many of them just out of school. I'd been working in the industry for a few years so I was more experienced but not very much. The effort it took was enormous. There was a hot tub there, people would go jump in. People would go sleep in their cars. It got to the point where there were some people practically living there.

Hamill: You see a lot of movies where you look at the special effects and say, "Gee, isn't that nice?", but you're saying that removed from the experience and it really doesn't mean anything. The effects in *Star Wars* made an emotional connection as well as a visual one. You cared about the situation enough so the effects complemented the action rather than dominated it. The best effects are the ones people don't notice, anyway. The ones you accept matter-of-factly, those are the exciting ones and the hardest to get right.

Lucas: Special effects don't make a movie. The story makes the movie. All the special effects do is allow you to tell a particular story.

THE INITIAL REACTION

Willard Huyck (writer/dialogue touch-ups): So George shows us the movie and it went on forever, there was tons of backstory. Part of the problem was that almost none of the effects were finished, and in their place George had inserted World War II dogfight footage, so one second you're with the Wookiee in the spaceship and the next you're in *The Bridges At Toko-Ri*. It was like, "George, what is going on?"

Gloria Katz (writer/dialogue touch-ups): When the film ended, people were aghast. Marcia [editor and Lucas' then wife] was really upset, she was saying, "Oh my God, it's *At Long Last Love*," which was the Bogdanovich picture that was such a disaster the year before. We said, "Marcia, fake it, fake it. Laddie [Alan Ladd Jr] is watching."

Hyuck: Then we all went out to go some place for lunch, and in our car everyone is saying, "My God, what a disaster!" All except Steven [Spielberg], who said, "No, that movie is going to make $100 million, and I'll tell you why. It has a marvellous innocence and naivety, which is George, and people will love it."

Katz: We sat down to eat, and Brian [De Palma] started making fun of the movie. He is very acerbic and funny.

Huyck: Which is the way Brian is. We all sat there very nervously while he let George have it, and George sank deeper into his chair. Brian was pretty rough.

Ladd Jr: We did a teaser trailer for it at Christmas, and the research showed that it was a disaster.

Irvin Kershner: I saw scenes from it quite early at a New Year's party at Francis Ford Coppola's. George was still working on it. And we were saying, "What have we got here? This is like a cartoon. Why is he doing this?" I just couldn't figure it out. And then I went to see it at the Academy for its first showing. And, of course, I got caught up in the tumult — the children were screaming and the adults were applauding. It was an event.

Hirsch: People were jumping and

leaping out of their seats, as if someone had hit a home run in Game Seven of a World Series. Afterward I said to George, "Is there anything you want to change?" And he said, "I guess we'll leave it alone."

THE SUCCESS

Huyck: We went to hide out on Hawaii. Then Laddie called me and said, "Turn on the evening news." So we turned it on and [legendary anchorman] Walter Cronkite was on, saying, "There's something extraordinary happening out there, and it's a result of a new movie called *Star Wars*." Cut to lines around the block in Manhattan. It was absolutely amazing. We were stunned. Now the studios can tell you what a movie is going to do — they have it down to a science how a movie is going to open. But in those days they didn't know.

Ladd Jr: We opened on 32 screens on a Wednesday and broke 30 house records. How anybody knew to be there I have no idea. George, his wife and my ex-wife, we all went off to Hawaii. So we were having dinner and we said, "Let's drive by the theatre where it is playing" — in Hawaii. And we go into the theatre, and there was carrying on and the line was two blocks long for the midnight show. It gave me goosebumps. So we got in the car and were driving back to the hotel, and George was really quiet. I said, "George, what is wrong?" And he said, "God, it upsets me to see that picture up there. I made so many mistakes. I wish I could take it out of release."

Kurtz: I was doing East Coast morning TV shows and at the end of the day, at a Washington DC phone-in, this young college kid called and said he really liked it. I asked if he was going to see it again and he said, "Oh yeah, I've seen it four times already." This was the first day!

Hamill: I went into *Corvette Summer* after *Star Wars*. We were off in the desert and then we went to Las Vegas. I was flavour of the month and I went crazy with the showgirls and playing around. That was a different era. I was really happy people liked it, but I thought it would just be a summer thing and then we'd move on. But it just went on and on, toys, hamburgers, potato chips, electric toothbrushes, underpants, wallpaper and you go, "Whoa, what is going on?"

Baker: It was just great to be involved in a big success like that. When the success came I was still involved in my double act. We'd done *Opportunity Knocks* three times and we'd been on the Dave Allen show, so we weren't really wholly committed to the *Star Wars* bit. I wasn't all that enamoured with being stuck in a robot but I made money out of it.

Lucas: I was amazed at how the film was accepted all over the world — it's penetrated the local culture wherever I go, and I've been to some pretty obscure places. That was very revealing of the way popular culture seems to get everywhere you can possibly imagine on this planet.

Clockwise from main: Physical Force from David Prowse's Darth Vader; The Royal Award Ceremony in the Great Temple — featuring 'The Dog', Chewbacca; An X-wing awaits its close-up.

THE PHENOMENON

Kasdan (screenwriter of *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return Of The Jedi*): *Star Wars* was a shift in the culture, which was possible only because George was this weird character. After you saw it, you thought, "My God, anything is possible." He opened up people's minds. Very few directors change things. Welles did things differently, but everything was different after *Star Wars*. All other pictures reflect its influence — some by ignoring it or rebelling against it.

Lucas: At college, one of my instructors said the Western was the last of the American mythology and probably one of the last of the world mythologies developed. Then in the '60s, the Western sort of fell by the wayside, especially in the film business. We were sitting there with nothing specifically mythic. One of the reasons I started doing the film was I was interested in creating a new kind of myth and using space to do it because that's the new frontier.

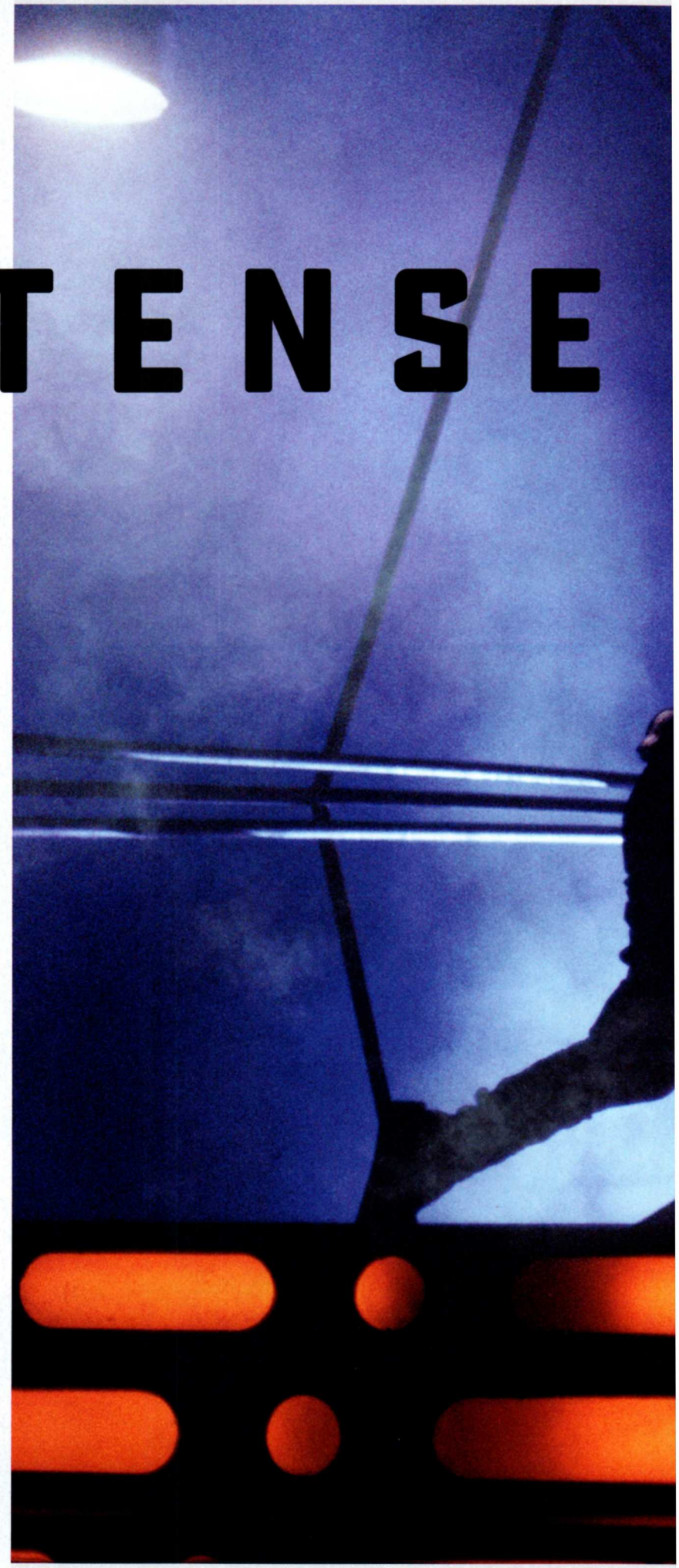
Baker: It was cowboys and Indians in space. It just worked. I don't know why. If we all knew the secret we could do it again. And we'd all be millionaires.

STAR WARS

DARKER, MORE INTENSE

On the eve of *Attack Of The Clones'* release in 2002, *Empire* looked back on the tumultuous making of *The Empire Strikes Back*, the original episode two

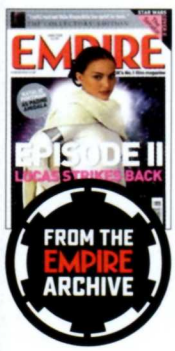
WORDS **IAN NATHAN**



DAGOBAH, THE STINKING, foetid swamp planet, long forgotten at the corner of the galaxy, was to be found on Elstree's Soundstage 3. Here production designer Norman Reynolds had flooded the concrete floor and planted Old Man's Beard, a hardy perennial that flourishes without sunlight. Fogged with dry ice, it became a dense, morbid place, just as George Lucas had imagined. In this purpose-built bog, the young Luke Skywalker was to get his Jedi training from master Yoda — the two-foot, melon-headed imp with a droll inverted speech pattern delivered by Muppeteer Frank Oz. Mark Hamill was finding these pivotal Yoda scenes taxing, all too aware of the technicians wiggling the little fella into action and, with his director Irvin Kershner below decks, he felt stranded and lost. It was a mood that had prevailed through the whole shoot, and as he slumped down for his last taste of Dagobah, and, as his rubber co-star urged him "to feel the Force", the weariness threatened to engulf him. Then, across the swamp there came a high-pitched screech from another galaxy altogether.

"Feelings?" squawked Miss Piggy, emerging onto the stage beside Yoda. "You wanna know about feelings? Get behind this couch and I'll show you feelings, ya little runt." Dressed in an elaborate lavender ensemble, the divine, felt pig took a brief look around and threatened to call her agent: "I've been booked in dumps before, but nothing like this." Hamill burst into much-needed laughter.

It was a moment of rare and refreshing comedy in a shoot that was becoming mired in enough turmoil to make the problematic *Star Wars* production look like a picnic at the Ranch. But it was to avail. In the grand tradition of traumatised creative endeavours, *The Empire Strikes Back* would not only equal its predecessor, it would surpass it, to become the *Star Wars* movie alongside which all others are measured.



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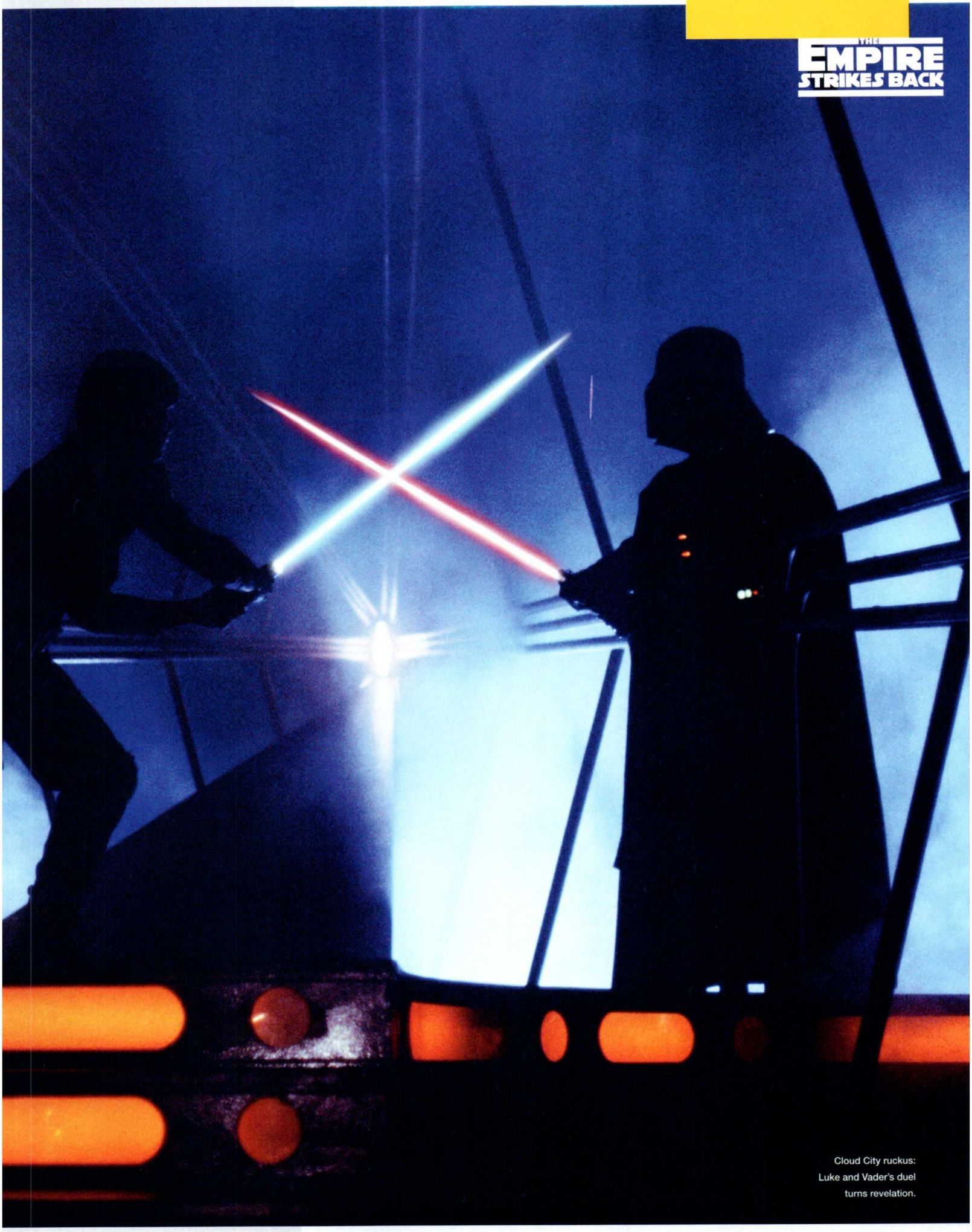


Cloud City ruckus: Luke and Vader's duel turns revelation.

"I WAS VERY nervous when I started the second film," Lucas admitted when the inevitable hunger for a sequel to the stellar *Star Wars* came into view. He knew, as the story fermented in his head, this would be a darker film, a chance to delve into the characters' relationships and throw light on the mystical power of the Force. If he got this one right, there was no knowing where it could stop. This was the chance to expand beyond the original, and boy, was he going to throw things open. If he got this wrong, he'd likely face a mob of furious devotees wielding plastic lightsabers, braying for his beard. He also had no wish to direct again, the ill-health and mega-stress caused by *Star Wars* meaning he was eager for someone else to take charge, although he remained a floating Ben Kenobi, hovering over the production.

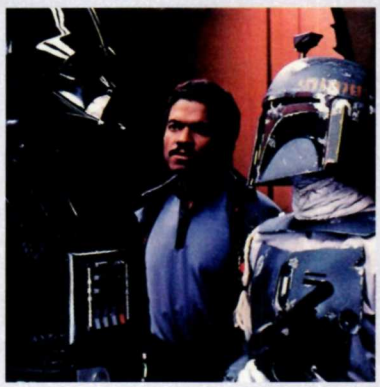
There were other issues as well. Lucasfilm was now a fully fledged company, requiring management, and he also had to oversee the move of ILM from LA to Marin County. His commitment, though, was total: it was still his private universe. This time, he was paying for the movie, borrowing the $15 million to finance it and cutting a revolutionary distribution deal with Fox, much to their chagrin. If he succeeded, the financial rewards would be incredible. The downside would be bankruptcy.

"At first I was contemplating selling the whole thing to Fox — I'd just take my percentage and go home and never think about *Star Wars* again. But the truth of it is, I got captivated by the thing. And I can't help but get upset or excited when something isn't the way it's supposed to be. I can see that world. I know the way the characters live and breathe."

With a formative storyline in his head — a long way off the finished film — he hired Leigh Brackett to write a screenplay based upon his ideas. She had co-written *The Big Sleep*, as well as a pair of sci-fi novels, and was a dab hand at the quickfire dialogue that so evaded Lucas. Here the shadow began to fall; two weeks after she handed in her first draft, Brackett died of cancer. With production looming and only the roughest of drafts ready, Lucas worked on his own version, deciding to hire another writer with whom his outline could be honed into a shooting script. Lawrence Kasdan had already been hired by Lucas to write *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*, and while wary of tampering with Hollywood's most successful movie, he felt attuned to *Star Wars*: "It was jaunty, wise-ass, fast, very modern — sort of a teenaged thing, a polished chrome kind of feel."

OVER THE PROCEEDING months, Kasdan and Lucas would reign in the rambling ideas, generate gripping turns of event and conjure up the biggest twist in sci-fi movie history. This was not going to be a standard sequel; it would be a progression. Naturally, there were to be new characters. The aforementioned Jedi titch, Yoda — referred to over successive drafts as The Critter, Minch, Minch Yoda, then plain old Yoda — developed from repulsive and slimy to a strange green creature not two feet tall and dressed in rags. "The goal," said Lucas, "is for the hero to learn to respect everybody and pay attention to the poorest person. That's the key to his success. Yoda must be the exact opposite of what you might think." After the droids, Yoda stands up as the most beloved character in the mythos.

There were also daring dramatic gambits, making the film much darker. To end the movie with one of the heroes — Han Solo — incarcerated in carbonite and in the hands of his enemies was hardly going out on a high. Frankly, it shook the audience to the core, but it was a powerful finale that made sure we understood that there was a lot more of this story to come. Romance brewed between Han and Leia, a beautifully judged sparring that cut across the more pompous growth of Luke as



Top: The greatest Muppet of all, enigmatic Jedi master Yoda. **Above:** Rapscallion-turned-Rebel Lando Calrissian (Billy Dee Williams). **Right:** The Star Destroyer makes a dramatic entrance. **Far right:** It's a hard day's shooting for Fisher and Ford...

a Jedi. But more extraordinarily, there was the grand revelation that Darth Vader was Luke's father, a counter thrust that lifted the film into movie history.

For his director Lucas needed someone who wasn't cynical about the material, who was quick, and who would understand who was in control. He needed an apprentice. Irvin Kershner was a veteran filmmaker who operated off grid, had a penchant for Force-like Zen Buddhism and knew Lucas from USC. Picked from 100 possibilities, he inevitably had his reservations.

"How could you make a second one that would be in any way as good?" he worried when Lucas proffered the chance. "And if not as good, at least be something original. So I asked him, 'How am I going to make a picture as good as *Star Wars*?', and he said he wanted a picture that was going to be better."

IT WASN'T GOING to be easy. In fact, it remains the hardest shoot of all the *Star Wars* movies to date. What could go wrong, did. For the ice planet Hoth, they began their shoot in Finse, Norway, as the worst winter in years struck northern Europe. As temperatures plunged, the crew were marooned in a ski lodge by avalanches. Meanwhile, the film began to snap in the icy wind and scenes became impossible to film. They returned to London with half the expected footage, and things proceeded to go downhill from there.

With scenes having to be reworked on set, costs started to sky-rocket. And, to Lucas' growing frustration, Kershner had his own tempo: slow.

"It has to be slower and more lyrical," Kershner mused on his approach to the space opera. "The themes have to be more interior." He wanted to improvise, causing endless delays and driving his producer (Gary Kurtz) and his immediate cast to distraction. Yet, his approach was yielding results — *Empire* is easily the most performance-led of the films — as he tampered with the precious dialogue and drew out emotions from his actors. For instance, the immortal confession of love between Leia and Han ("I love you"; "I know") occurred almost through frustration. Han's original reply was, "I love you, too," which Kershner found sappy, so he got Ford to improvise. Again and again. The crew were hot and bothered, they were high up on a rig in Elstree and lunch had been called. Finally, Ford called a halt: "Let's do it one more time and that's it." So they went again and he replied: "I know." In editing Lucas was horrified; this wasn't the stuff of Han Solo, but Kershner held firm and at a test screening in North Beech, the audience roared their approval. The line stuck.

As the actors got bored, there was talk of plot points being leaked to the press, so much so that Lucas created a league table of offenders: Dave Prowse (Darth Vader, in body at least; James Earl Jones provided the voice) picked up the wooden spoon, with allegedly nine leaks. Sets collapsed, gadgets broke down, Ford and Fisher quarrelled endlessly (both were going through personal traumas at the time), and Hamill was lonely and disgruntled. "Physically it was much more demanding than *Star Wars*," Kurtz said, as he tried to hold things together. "This one would have laid George out."

Lucas, meanwhile, was busy supervising ILM through the rigours of special effects. It was taking forever, as his ideas expanded and ILM wrestled his imagination onto film. Through 15-hour shifts and exacting demands, they laboured over "walking tanks" (AT-ATs), "a floating city" (Bespin) and a space chase through an asteroid field. But Lucas was getting superb results, even managing to spend his nights revising Kasdan's script for *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*.

Then they ran out of money. Lucas blamed Kurtz's inability to say no to Kershner, as the budget ballooned to £22 million. Finally, financial backers the Bank Of America called a halt. With wages to pay, Lucasfilm president Charles Weber went to First National Bank Of Boston to buy out that debt to the tune of $25 million. Lucas promised to pay back the money from his own pocket ("I will eventually pay you back, if it takes me the rest of my life"), but it took a humiliating trip to Fox (to secure their support as guarantors) for the loan to come through. When *Empire* was finally complete, it had cost $33 million.

"It was jaunty, wise-ass, fast, very modern — sort of a teenaged thing, a polished chrome feel."

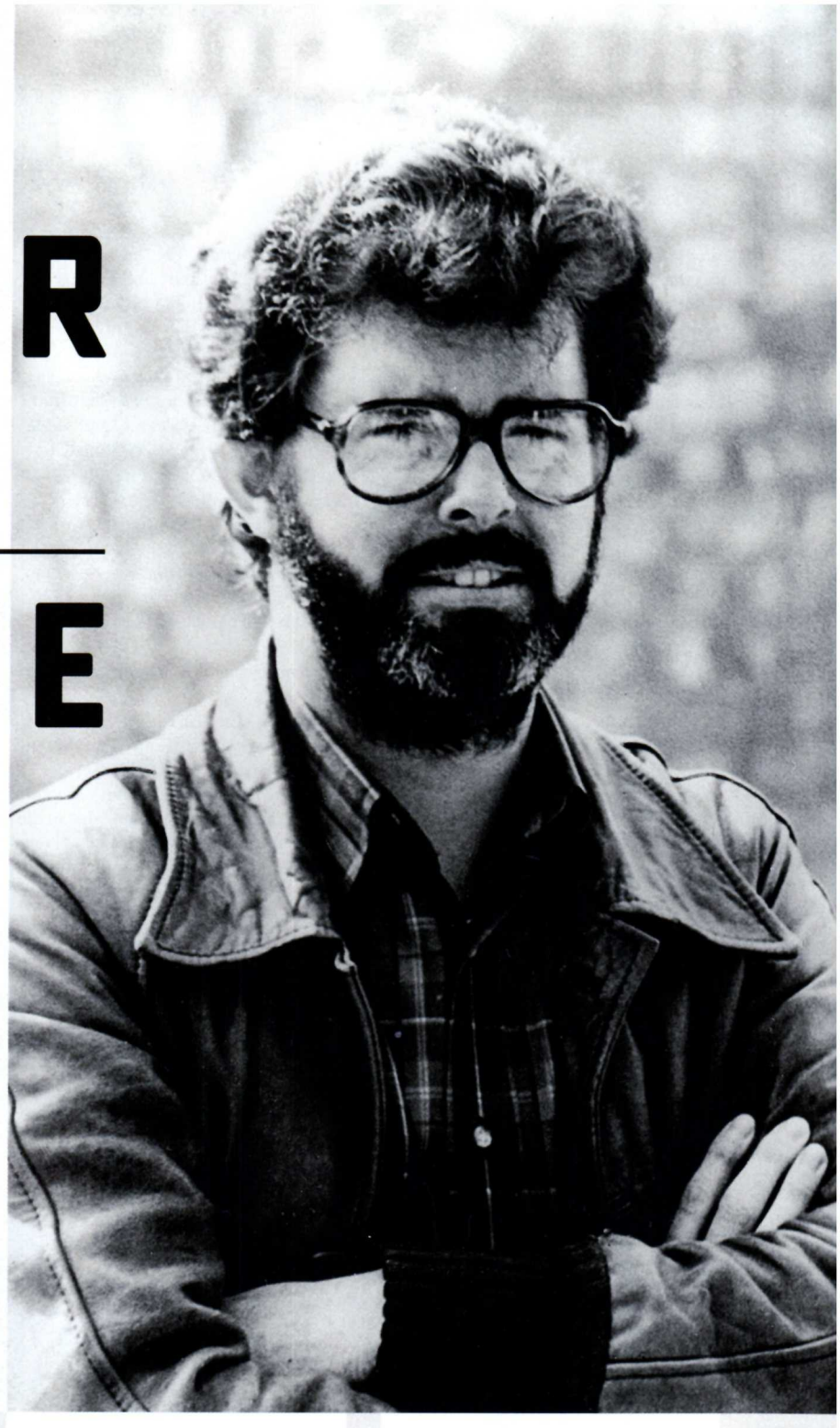
Lawrence Kasdan

WITHIN THREE MONTHS *Empire* had recouped back the entire $33 million outlay, eventually (excluding the re-release) making more than $300 million worldwide. For all the pain involved, Lucas had proved himself the born storyteller, and *Empire* had not only equalled the mammoth expectations, it had exceeded them. It also proved Lucas could do it without having to direct himself, and, for all intents, outside of the Hollywood system. *Star Wars* invented a universe and transformed cinema; *Empire*, with its hanging ending and mind-blowing revelations, elevated the idea of *Star Wars* into a grand family saga and revolutionised the way movies could be made. It made the difference.

FATHER FIGURE

Speaking exclusively to *Empire* in 2014, George Lucas discussed why *The Empire Strikes Back* is considered the best of the series

WORDS **IAN FREER**



When you think about *The Empire Strikes Back* as a movie, what do you think of?
I think it's soulful, but in a different way from *Episode IV*. It's a little bit more adult. As a director, I'm more goofy. If you take *American Graffiti* and *Star Wars*, you'll see what people used to call "effervescent giddiness", which is just the way I am. [Director Irvin] Kershner was much more of a serious person. He loved the whole religious aspect of it, Luke learning the Force. A lot of that has to do with Buddhism, and Kersh was a Buddhist.

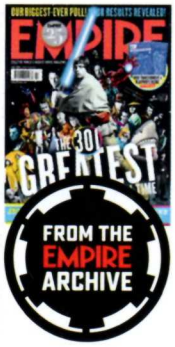
Why do you think it is so beloved?
Well, it's relative. All the films are beloved by somebody. The fans like *The Empire Strikes Back* the best, partly because it is so dark. It's an overall story and, as it's the second act, things get dark. When it became three separate films, it had an interesting effect of each film having its own personality.

Did you have concerns about how dark it was going to get?
I wasn't too worried. I found it interesting. The part I had the most difficulty with was the father cutting off his son's hand and then [not] resolving it. In mythology, it's a key psychological motif between the father and the son — the son feeling that the father has got a bigger dick. I was worried it would have an effect on people. I took it to a number of psychologists and they all agreed it wouldn't. If kids were bothered by it — particularly boys' relationships to their father — they would just think Vader was lying and would resolve it themselves. As it turned out, that's what happened.

Can you imagine trying to keep the Vader/Luke reveal secret today?
No. It was pretty remarkable we pulled it off then. It was without the internet but it was still extremely intense. Literally, I didn't tell anybody. Even the producer didn't know. It wasn't until James Earl Jones came on that it was revealed what he was actually saying. We expected it to leak then, but it didn't. It made it through the sound mix where the group widened. Then, everybody came out of the first screening and said, "He's his FATHER!" Personally, I think it was one of the last real reveals. Now you can't do it.

You also left Han Solo, debatably the most popular character, in limbo.
Harrison kept yelling through the whole thing, "Kill me! Kill me! Kill me!" I said, "Harrison, I can't kill you, I need you at the end of the next movie. There's this love story thing going on. But I'll do the next best thing. I'll put you in a slab of concrete and ship you off to Mars."

***Empire*'s narrative shape is unusual in that its battle occurs early. Did that worry you?**
That was a big deal. I was playing with the norm and I was hoping I could get away with it. I just decided I could deal with it emotionally. There's a big sword fight at the end. That's a sort of big action scene. It just doesn't compare with the Death Star. So I said, "I'm going for an emotional battle and that will be the



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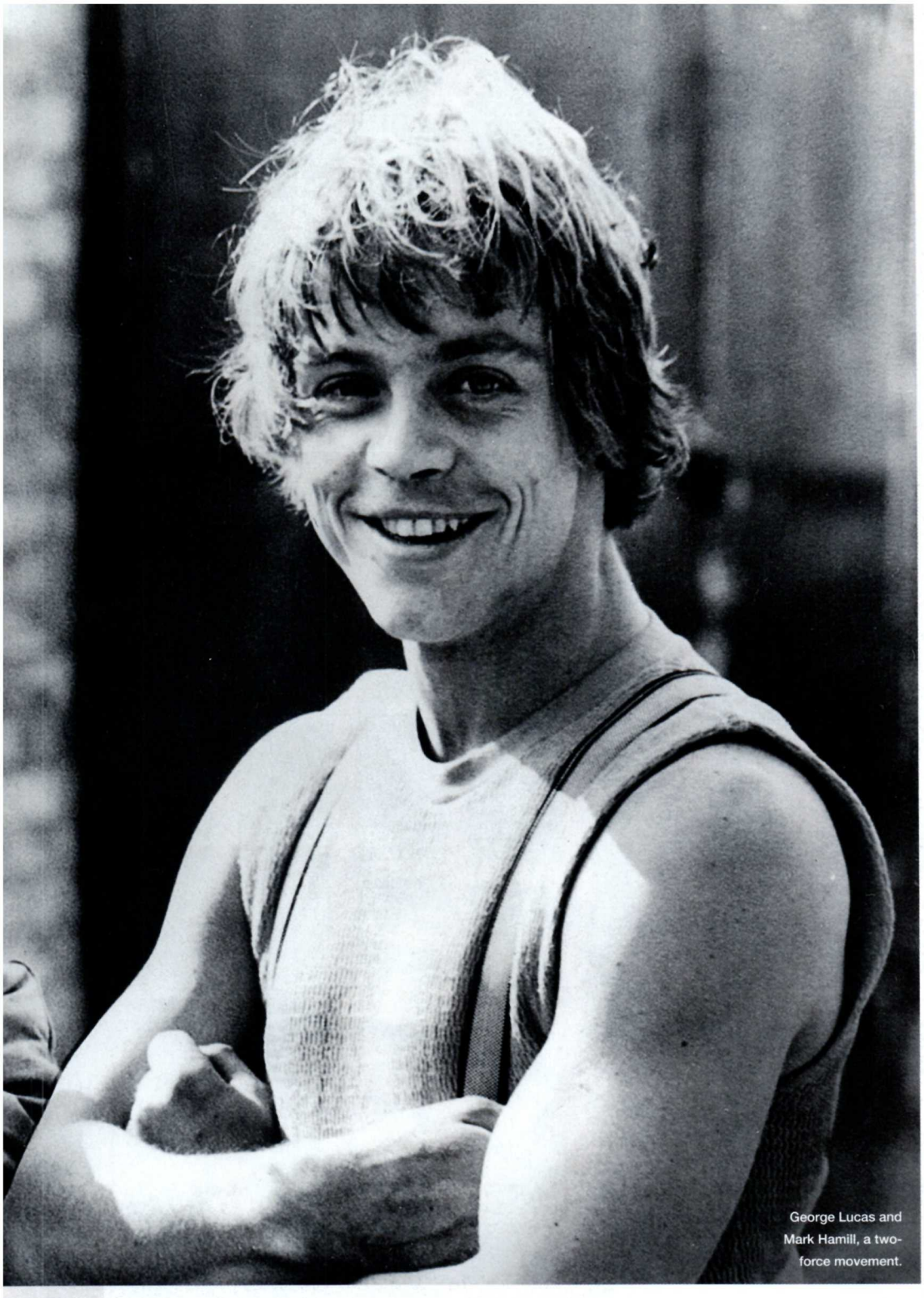


George Lucas and Mark Hamill, a two-force movement.

"The *Star Wars* films were designed to inspire kids to think outside the box. They did make a difference, which I see every day."

George Lucas

climax of the movie." Now, everybody does a big action scene, they don't even think about it anymore. I wasn't just making an action movie, I was telling a story. That's the way the story went.

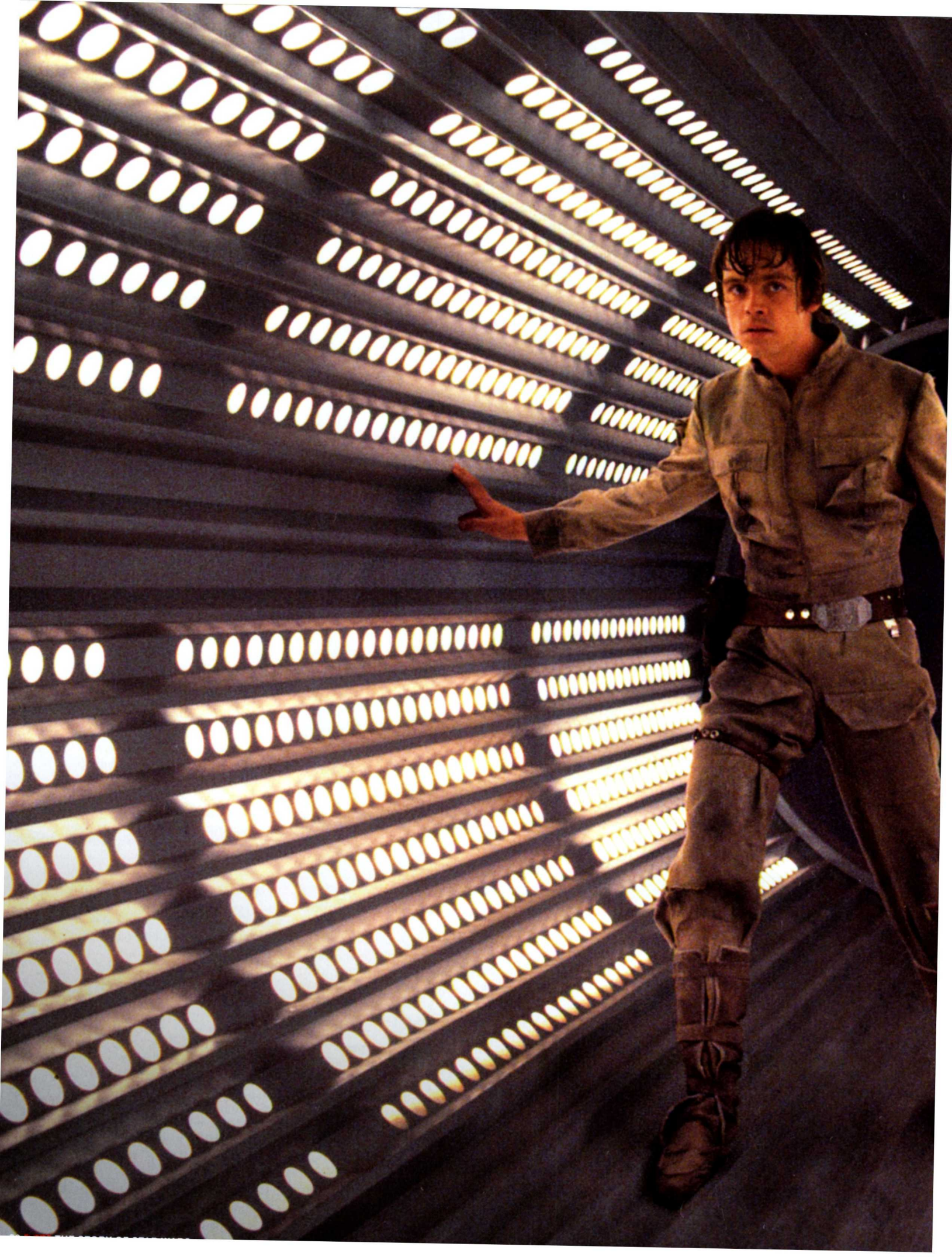
The other big risk was it put a Muppet at the centre of the movie.
The tradition in fairy tales is that there is a little creature that the hero comes across who is actually a great wizard. I liked the idea of it being somebody you would never guess to be a Jedi. I wanted to do a really small character but I wanted him to look like he could actually be a real creature. It's really the actors who do it, it's not really the puppet. Between Stuart Freeborn, Frank Oz and Jim, we were able to kludge that thing together. I said, "If this doesn't work, the movie is going to fail. It's that simple."

Many *Empire* alumni call it the toughest shoot of their careers. How do you view it?
In the beginning, I said, "Okay, I'll let them make the movie. I'm not going to be there pressuring them." I knew if I were on the set, it would be a whole different thing. Unfortunately Norway [doubling for Hoth] was supposed to be a ten-day shoot and went way over budget, way over schedule. When they came back to England, I sort of moved in with them and realised I had to be there every day. Kershner was very nervous and worried about the whole thing. I kept trying to say, "It's okay, don't worry, just focus on the day-to-day reality." Kershner fortunately bought into what the story was. He was good about collaborating. So I took over the burden of the special effects and let him worry about the actors and the story.

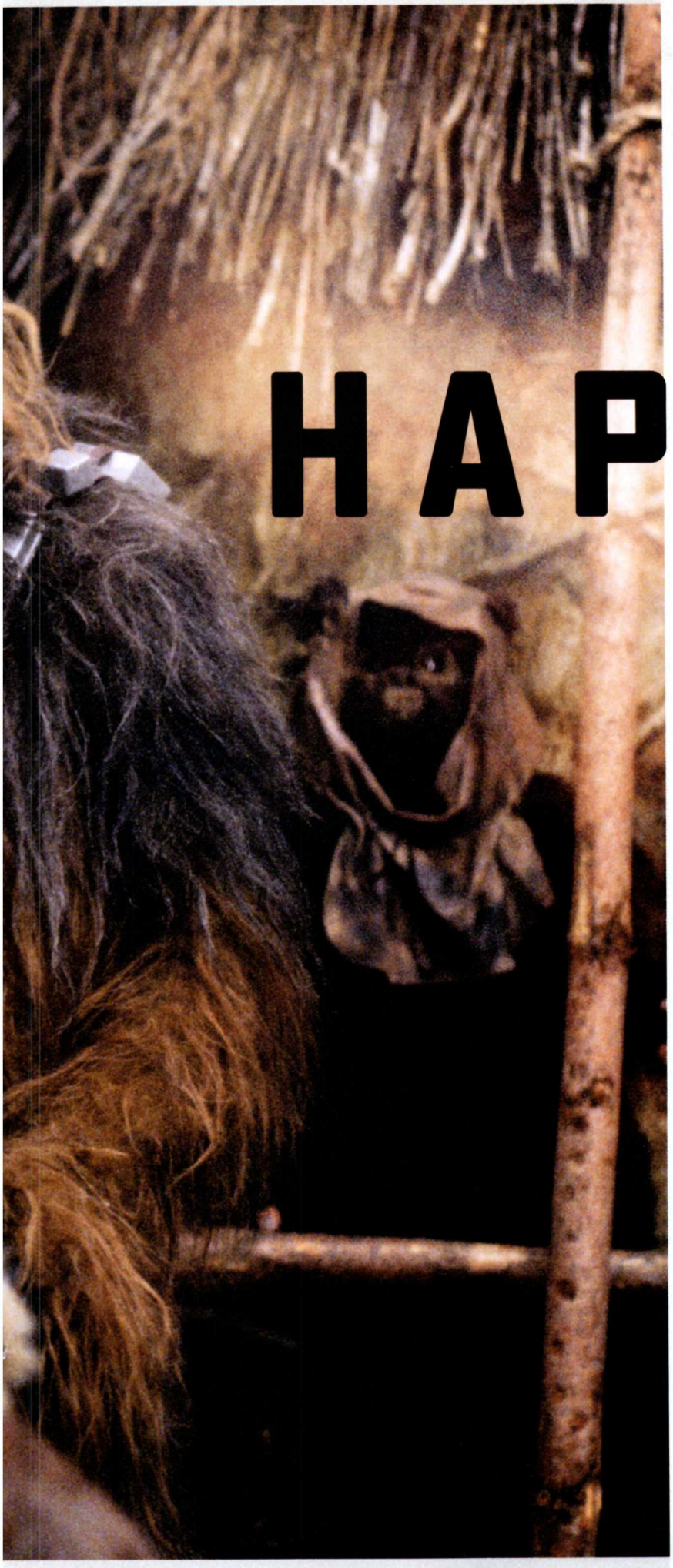
And you financed the movie yourself.
The reality of it was that it was going way over schedule, way over budget. I was in hock up to my ears to pay for it. Then the bank cancelled the loan and I was stuck halfway through the movie. I didn't have any money and I had run out of everything. Fortunately we were able to get another loan from another bank but it was under extreme duress. And then they went over budget again.

How did that feel?
It was pretty bleak [*laughs*]. There was no guarantee it was going to work. I had just done *More American Graffiti*, which tanked. The first *Star Wars* was a really low-budget movie — $13 million — and we shot it practically overnight. The second one cost three times that much and took a lot longer. I thought it would still be low-budget but it didn't turn out that way. Fortunately it was successful and I got my money back.

How do you feel about the *Star Wars* saga now you have handed it on?
I love the *Star Wars* films. I'm glad I made them. They were designed to inspire kids to think outside the box. When we were doing those films, everybody told me, "You can't do a lightsaber because the laser light would go on forever." Now a couple of kids spent a couple of years at MIT and they built a lightsaber where the laser stops. The [films] did make a difference, which I see every day.

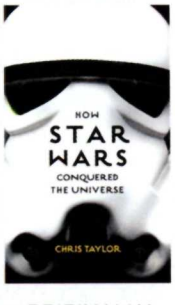


Han, Luke, Leia and Chewie join the Ewoks for their we-defeated-the-Empire-and-stole-the-movie shindig.



HAPPILY EVER AFTER?

How George Lucas struggled to find the perfect ending for his epic space fantasy trilogy



ORIGINALLY APPEARED IN **HOW STAR WARS CONQUERED THE UNIVERSE** BY CHRIS TAYLOR

FROM EMPIRE: As the summer of 1980 drew to a close, George Lucas had been vindicated. He'd gambled on the success of *The Empire Strikes Back*: after putting up $15 million of his own money, the film was well on its way to its $450 million worldwide box office. Thoughts now turned to the third film, which would need to tie up the various plot threads *Empire* had left dangling, while providing a suitably thrilling finale. Lucas wrote a first script, in it solving the question of who Yoda meant by, "No, there is another." But, as recounted by Chris Taylor in his book *How Star Wars Conquered The Universe*, then the real work began. ›

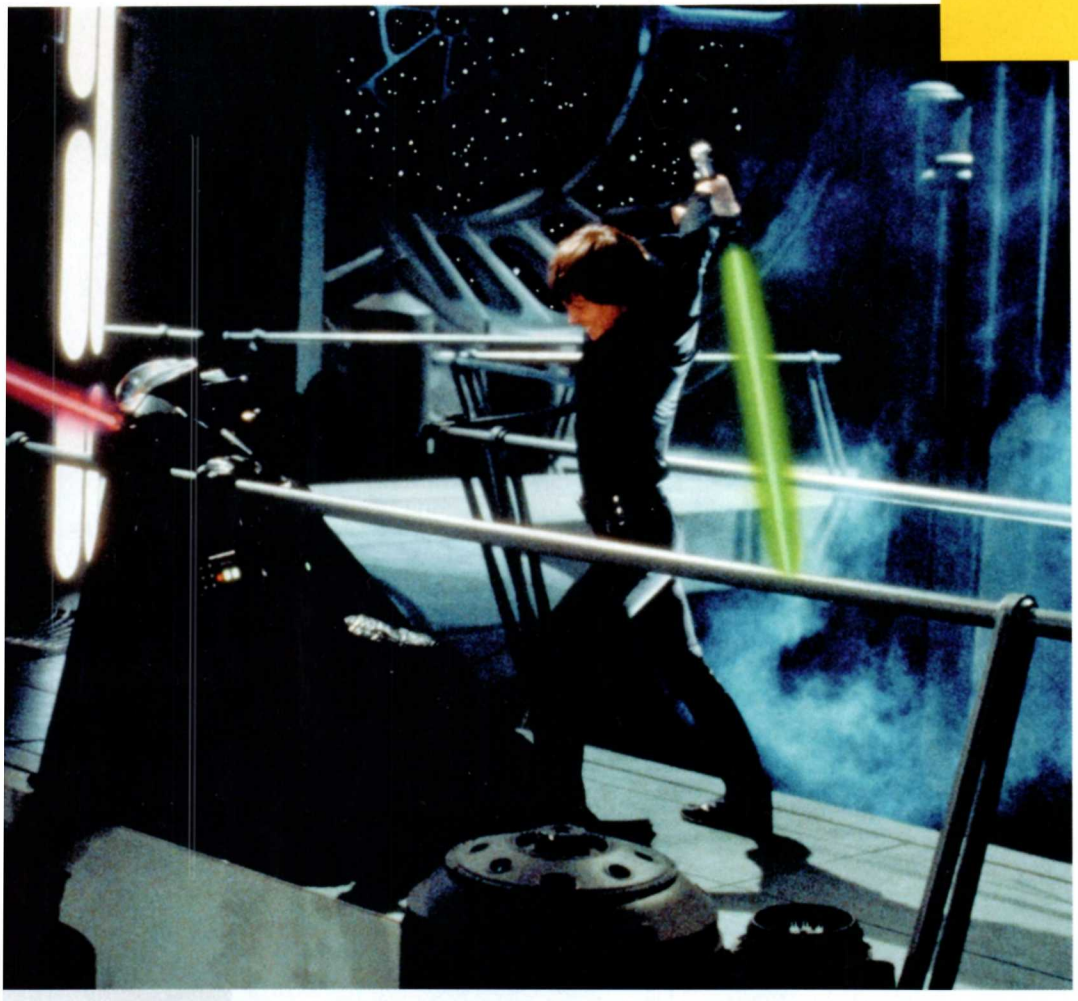
WITH A SCRIPT in hand, Lucas was ready to pick another director. Kershner had declined the opportunity to stay with the franchise for another two years. "I didn't want to be a Lucas employee," he said in 2004. "And I'd read the script of *Jedi*, and I didn't believe it." Lucas' first choice for Kershner's replacement, after the experience of *Raiders*, would have been Spielberg. Lucas had quit the Directors Guild of America over a spat about whether Kershner's director credit should have been placed at the beginning of the movie [*The Empire Strikes Back*], and Spielberg remained a member, but the lawyers didn't deem this a problem. The problem was that Spielberg was deeply entrenched in his latest science-fiction project, a movie about a friendly alien based on an imaginary childhood friend of Spielberg's.

[Producer Howard G.] Kazanjian drew up a shortlist of a hundred possible directors that was quickly whittled down to 20, then 12. At the top of the list was David Lynch, the young auteur behind *Eraserhead* and *The Elephant Man*, and a particular favourite of Lucas'. Lynch was brought up to Marin and extensively wooed. But as soon as he was shown around the art department and saw the first pictures of the Ewoks, Lynch got a headache that developed into a full-blown migraine. This, evidently, he saw as a bad omen. Three days after Lucas made him the offer, Lynch declined. It later emerged that he had received what seemed like a much better offer: the chance to direct the big-screen, big-budget version of *Dune*, the rights to which had just been renegotiated by Dino De Laurentiis. Once again, De Laurentiis had beaten Lucas to something he wanted [*Flash Gordon*]. And once again, it would not turn out as well as planned: Lynch would spend $40 million on a long and troubled shoot. *Dune* would earn only $30 million of it back, becoming the most infamous turkey in science-fiction movie history — to the gleeful delight of would-be *Dune* director Alejandro Jodorowsky.

Shorn of proven top-tier directors, Lucas briefly considered coming out of directorial retirement. "I wanted to get it out of my system and finish the damn thing off," he explained to *People* magazine in 1983, "but I was stopped by the amount of work." Instead, he picked a relative unknown, the Cardiff-born director Richard Marquand, best known for a TV movie about the Beatles as well as a Ken Follett spy drama with Donald Sutherland, *Eye Of The Needle*. Marquand came well equipped with metaphors: *Star Wars* was "the most exciting and grandiose film of all time," he said, "the myth of the '70s and the '80s, just as The Beatles were the myth of the '60s and early '70s." He was so impulsively eager to do it that, during the selection stage, he called up to request a second interview with Lucas, at which he proceeded to rhapsodise about how right he was for the film. He would, as Kazanjian said, prove "flexible". Lucas would be executive producer, but as he would later point out, this was more like the executive producer on a TV show — someone who came up with the scripts and the overall direction of the series, while the director handled the tricky business of dealing with actors.

Marquand readily agreed and would spend the next two years professing how overawed he was with the responsibility in front of him. He would variously compare directing *Jedi* to directing *King Lear* "with Shakespeare in the next room" and to conducting the Ninth Symphony with Beethoven listening in. That may have been a little hyperbolic, but Lucas would indeed spend nearly all of the shoot on the set. Nominally he was a second-unit director, but effectively he acted as co-director — very much the senior partner. You can see it in clips from the set: Marquand gives orders, but the crew is listening to Lucas. When the orders were in conflict, there was no question who

Leia gets a new costume. As Carrie Fisher recalled, Jeremy Bulloch (Boba Fett) was right behind her here and "could see all the way to Texas". **Above right:** Luke versus Vader #2. Dad's about to lose his hand. **Right:** Boba Fett, moments before his untimely demise.



was in charge. This time, there would be no sneaking looks through the camera like a kid stealing a cookie [as Kershner accused Lucas of doing].

With a director selected, Lucas wrote a rushed second draft, and then came one of the most enjoyable parts of the production: sitting around a table at his growing Parkway mansion in San Anselmo with Kazanjian, Marquand and Lawrence Kasdan, who had been reluctantly brought back into the *Star Wars* fold. Kasdan agreed to write a draft in exchange for the promise of Lucas' help on his first directorial feature, *Body Heat*. The four of them talked about the story of 'Revenge Of The Jedi', as it was at that point, for five days, ten hours a day, getting lost in the details and the possibilities. There were no sacred cows in this discussion. Marquand may have been in awe of the creator, but Kasdan set out to provoke him into interesting responses and a darker alternative to what he called a "wimpy ending":

Kasdan: I think you should kill Luke and have Leia take over.
Lucas: You don't want to kill Luke.
Kasdan: Okay, then kill Yoda.
Lucas: I don't want to kill Yoda. You don't have to kill people. You're a product of the 1980s. You don't go around killing people. It's not nice... I think you alienate the audience.
Kasdan: I'm saying that the movie has more emotional weight if someone you love is lost along the way; the journey has more impact.
Lucas: I don't like that and I don't believe that... I have always hated that in movies, when you go along and one of the main characters gets killed. This is a fairy tale. You want everybody to live happily ever after and nothing bad happens to anybody... The whole emotion I am trying to get at the end of the film is for you to be real uplifted, emotionally and spiritually, and feel absolutely good about life.

"This is a fairy tale. You want everybody to live happily ever after and nothing bad happens."

George Lucas

EVENTUALLY, LUCAS CONCEDED the point: somebody would have to fall along the way. For a while, it was to be Lando Calrissian, nobly killed in the destruction of the second Death Star, and the quartet agonised over how they were going to tell Billy Dee Williams. Eventually, however, Lucas decided it made sense to show us Yoda dying of old age near the start, ending his life by confirming to Luke that Vader was his father and revealing that Leia was his sister, after which he would disappear like Kenobi. Much of what we now know as *Return Of The Jedi* was hashed out around that table in those 50 hours. In his second draft, Lucas had actually given us two Death Stars, both under construction over the city-planet that governed the galaxy, then called Had Abbadon. Kasdan declared that two Death Stars gave the rebels "too many targets". Marquand contributed the idea that the remaining Death Star should appear to be under construction, but should in fact be fully operational. Had Abbadon was reluctantly

AN AUDIENCE WITH THE ADMIRAL

IN A 2013 *EMPIRE*, ADMIRAL ACKBAR PUPPETEER TIM ROSE REFLECTED ON HIS MOST FAMOUS CHARACTER

"I CALL IT the second coming," laughs puppeteer Tim Rose, the man with his hand up *Jedi*'s iconic Admiral Ackbar. "Everyone knows his line, 'It's a trap!' more than they know Ackbar; that's nothing to do with the original performance, it's the internet."

A Jim Henson alumnus, Rose became a puppeteer on *Jedi* after creature supervisor Phil Tippett fell off scaffolding performing Sy Snootles and broke his arm. As well as Snootles ("The original song was so much better") and Salacious Crumb ("Everyone loved talking to Salacious. Nobody talked to me'), he took on Ackbar, a half-body puppet and a detailed mask for dialogue shots. Yet Rose was nearly axed when, rather than celebrate the destruction of the Death Star, he let the wise Admiral just slump in his floaty chair.

"I came within a hair's breadth of being sent to Vietnam myself. I was trying to convey we lost lots of people on both sides, so what are we celebrating here?" Richard Marquand got very angry and threatened to fire me. I've met a lot of people over the years who actually got what I was trying to say in that scene. That's hard to do in a rubber suit."

In the years since, a cult has slowly evolved around Ackbar — there are around 1,000 YouTube videos riffing on his line, while *Robot Chicken* created skits on Admiral Ackbar cereal ["Your tongues can't repel flavour of that magnitude!"]. This surge in Ackbar affection has led Rose to create a second wind for the character. "I've wanted to make a puppet of Ackbar in a wheelchair. All the fans want to hear about the big day when it was a trap and he would be an old codger going, 'No, I don't want to talk about it! Just watch the film.'" **IAN FREER**

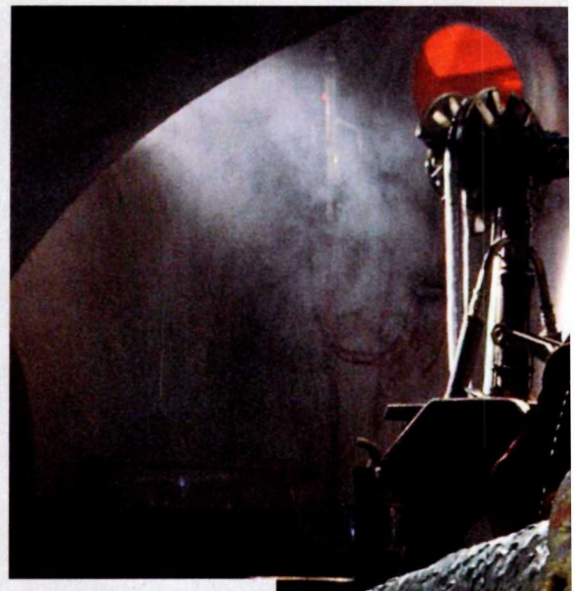


ILLUSTRATION **BILL McCONKEY**

Clockwise from left: The Ewoks have proved divisive, but everyone loves Wicket (Warwick Davis), right?; Jabba The Hutt, flanked by a Jawa minion and Bib Fortuna (Michael Carter), with Salacious B. Crumb (voiced by Mark Dodson) at the front; It's all over for the second Death Star. All hail those Ewoks!

abandoned: it would be a prohibitively expensive thing to film. In Lucas' early scripts, Vader brings Luke to the Emperor in the Emperor's palace on the planet, a place of stone walkways over bubbling lava. By the time the conference was over, the Emperor had been transferred to the one remaining Death Star.

Then there was the problem of Darth Vader. In Lucas' early drafts Vader has an unusual story arc: not redemption, but irrelevance. The Grand Moff Jerjerrod, the Emperor's new favourite, makes his superiority to Vader clear and the Emperor's displeasure over Vader's failure to turn Skywalker to the dark side even clearer. Vader's loyalty wavers until the Emperor Force-chokes him, silencing that familiar iron-lung breathing and seemingly pacifying his apprentice. There is a showdown involving Luke and the Force ghosts of Obi-Wan and Yoda on one side and Vader and the Emperor on the other, which is brought to a conclusion when Vader suddenly throws the ruler of the galaxy into the lava, possibly under the influence of Yoda. In the second draft, Lucas — under the influence of his brains trust — gave Vader a death scene on the Death Star in which Luke removes his mask. In that moment, Vader is redeemed; we see a sad old man, relying on bionics to keep him alive. "The whole machine thing becomes a partial metaphor for the dark side of the Force," Lucas realised, "which is: machines have no feelings." For all his relative lack of influence, Marquand was able to interject with one more good idea — that Anakin Skywalker, now redeemed, should say a few words with the mask off before he dies.

The redemption of Darth Vader would rub some fans the wrong way: the ultimate screen villain of the 20th century turns out to be a Wizard Of Oz figure, and that somehow makes everything that came before it acceptable. Some *Star Wars* luminaries wondered what message that sent. "It's like Hitler's on his deathbed and he repents and everything's okay," said [*Star Wars* novelisation and sci-fi author] Alan Dean Foster. "'I've murdered eight million people, but I'm sorry.' I just couldn't go with that." Kazanjian, a devout Christian, would have that problem as well, until Lucas pointed out that his religion emphasised forgiveness. Thereafter, Kazanjian was a convert and came up with the suggestion that Anakin Skywalker's ghost should make an appearance at the end alongside Obi-Wan and Yoda.

The only character to fare poorly out of the redrafting process was Leia. In Lucas' early scripts, she got her first command on the as-yet-unnamed 'Green Moon' where the Ewoks live. By the time Kasdan wrote his draft, she was just one member of Han's mission. Carrie Fisher had asked Lucas for some sort of edge to the character, perhaps a drinking problem; something, at least, to suggest the suffering the princess had been through, the genocide of her entire planet. She got a slave bikini.

WITH KASDAN'S SHOOTING script ready, production could finally begin under the fake-out title 'Blue Harvest'. *Return Of The Jedi* proved to be a difficult shoot, and by the end George Lucas was done — with *Star Wars*, and with filmmaking in general. The film was a success, financially speaking at least, although it was generally considered the weakest of the trilogy, and it made him reassess his priorities. After rounding out 1983 producing *Indiana Jones And The Temple Of Doom*, he took a step back from movies to concentrate on other interests, such as Lucasfilm. After all, with the likes of ILM and Pixar under the Lucasfilm umbrella, there was plenty to keep him busy. He had an empire to run.

HOW STAR WARS CONQUERED THE UNIVERSE BY CHRIS TAYLOR IS OUT NOW IN PAPERBACK (HEAD OF ZEUS), PRICED £9.99

RETURN
OF THE
JEDI

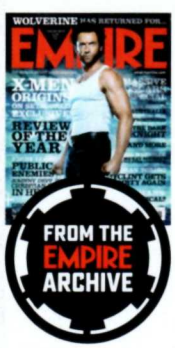
MAY THE FARCE BE WITH YOU

"It was an experiment gone bad," said George Lucas. As it approached its 30th year, *Empire* revisited the *Star Wars Holiday Special*

ON 8 FEBRUARY 2006, Harrison Ford appeared on TV talk show *Late Night With Conan O'Brien*. O'Brien, a huge *Star Wars* fan, was ostensibly giving Ford the chance to plug his latest thriller, *Firewall* — the one where he plays a bank computer-security officer — but with one little question, O'Brien injected a palpable sense of unease into the interview.

"Do you remember making the *Star Wars Holiday Special*?" Ford greeted this with a nervous shake of the head and stern silence. O'Brien upped the ante by threatening to show a clip and Ford jokingly grabbed O'Brien by the lapels. Then O'Brien ran the clip and Ford tried to play along, pulling anxious, distracted grimaces. When the horror finally came to an end, Ford muttered a gruff, sarcastic, "Thank you." Talk turned quickly to *Firewall*.

Ford's embarrassment is just the fringe of the frisson surrounding the *Star Wars Holiday Special*, in which George Lucas' galaxy far, far away collided with the cheesy TV variety show, seeing Han, Luke, Artoo and Threepio share screentime with the likes of Art Carney, Bea Arthur and Jefferson Starship. Ever since its only US airing on CBS in 1978, the *Holiday Special* — the holiday it refers to is Thanksgiving, not Christmas, as is often misreported — has elicited a constant source of curiosity, comedy, disbelief, dismay, debate and enmity among the fanbase. For, however bad you imagine it to be, nothing can prepare you for the sheer awfulness that plays out over its 97 minutes (120 minutes with ads). It's just something you have to experience for yourself.



FROM THE EMPIRE ARCHIVE

ORIGINALLY APPEARED IN **EMPIRE NO.235 JANUARY 2009**

Main: The Wookiee family unit with Chewie, wife Malla, father Itchy and son Lumpy.
Above left: Harvey Korman's Chef Gormaanda.
Left: Cantina barkeep Ackmena, played by *The Golden Girls*' Bea Arthur.

"You need to see it with a bunch of friends who can ooh and ahh and gasp," advises Anthony Daniels, who luckily went through the whole debacle behind C-3PO's mask. "I own a pirate video, but I have to be pretty drunk to watch it."

For years, the *Star Wars Holiday Special* took on a rarefied, talismanic significance within the fan community. It was something you heard about from friends of friends, glimpsed grainy black-and-white pictures of in *Starlog*, searched for at movie conventions, looking for that elusive VHS. Now, in this age of eBay/YouTube accessibility, it seems the right time to ask the simple questions: what the hell is it, and how the hell did it happen?

IN MAY 1978, George Lucas was approached by TV company Smith-Hemion to do a *Star Wars* TV one-off. A year after its release, *Star Wars* was still riding high in theatres — many cinemas held one-year birthday parties to celebrate — and the opportunities for (bullshit marketing phrase alert!) synergy seemed too good to miss.

"When you are starting out, you try all kinds of things," Lucas told *Empire* in 1999. "Fox said, 'We can promote the film by doing a TV special.' So I kind of got talked into doing the *Special*."

At this stage, Lucas must have felt he had put his baby in good hands. Smith-Hemion were a production outfit well-versed in making populist TV spectaculars starring the cream of showbiz royalty: Frank Sinatra, John Wayne, Neil Diamond, Elvis Presley, Kermit The Frog. As well as a strong pedigree, they also had a thick contacts book, including ties with a Canadian animation company, Nelvana, one of the few to emerge from the whole farrago with any credit. Lucas, busy with *The Empire Strikes Back* and *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*, provided some story ideas and access to cast and props, then pretty much left the project alone. It was a decision he would come to rue.

With a budget of around $1 million and a month to shoot at Burbank Studios, David Acomba, a classmate of Lucas' at USC and a maker of music-based projects, was initially hired to direct. But he swiftly left the project over creative differences and was replaced by Steve Binder, the director of Elvis Presley's *'68 Comeback Special*.

For the core idea, Lucas returned to an idea that had fascinated him during the early drafts of *Star Wars*. "I thought it would be fun to do a story about Wookiees," he says simply. Passing through a clutch of writers — Leonard Ripps (later to write *Frankenweenie*), *The Donnie And Marie Show*'s Bruce Vilanch, *The Carol Burnett Show*'s Mitzie and Ken Welch, Pat Proft (of *Naked Gun* fame) — the script worked through five drafts, moving into increasingly bizarre areas.

"It felt like 'Episode 32' of the saga," recalls Vilanch. "Unfortunately, when they talk, all the Wookiees sound like fat people having orgasms. So they're tough to write for. Every line of dialogue is,'Oh, ee, ahh.' How do you write that? The Wookiees can't speak, but the Wookiees were the central characters. So I said, 'Well, we have to load this up with stars who sing and dance and do schtick to cover up that the story is about these walking carpets!'"

THE ACTUAL 'PREMISE' of the *Holiday Special* is not terrible enough to set alarm bells ringing straightaway: caught under fire by an Imperial blockade, Han Solo and Chewbacca are struggling to get back to Chewie's home planet of Kashyyyk to join the celebration of Life Day, the Wookiee equivalent of Thanksgiving. Back on Kashyyyk, Chewbacca's nuclear family — his missus Malla, his dad Itchy and his son Lumpy — nervously await his arrival. Yet rather than do what normal families do on boring Bank Holidays (sit in traffic, queue forever in B&Q, watch *Uncle Buck* followed by *The World's Strongest Man*), Chewbacca's clan find their own means of amusement, each one more ludicrous than the last. And yes, you did read that right: it's Itchy and Lumpy.

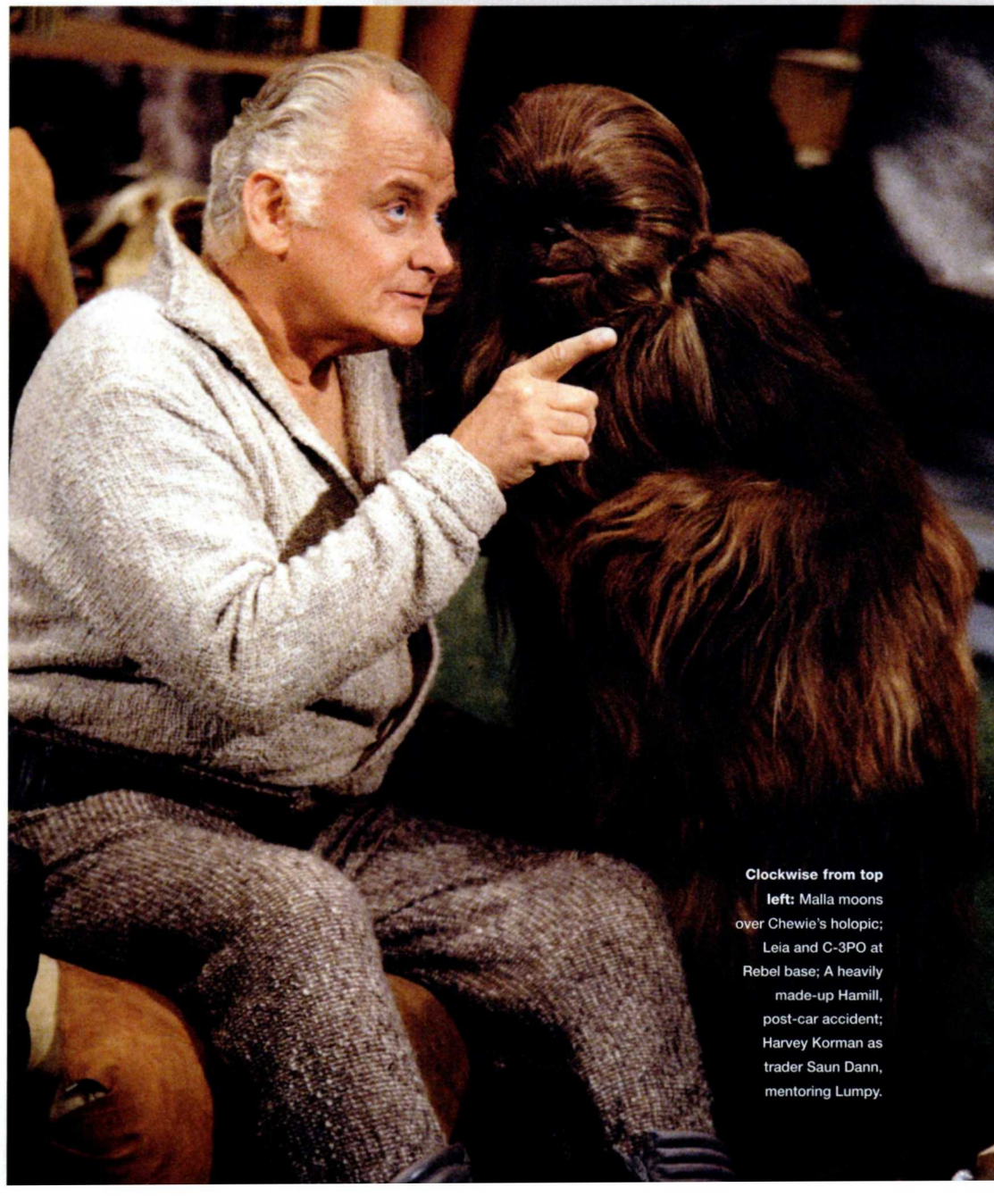
"It was my first experience of television," reflected Lucas. "It just kept getting reworked and reworked, moving away into this bizarre land. They were trying to make one kind of thing and I was trying to make another, and it ended up being a weird hybrid between the two. I'm not sure either position would have worked on its own, but by combining them..."

By the time the *Star Wars Holiday Special* was ready to air, Lucas had removed his name from the credits. Accompanied by huge hype, the show was broadcast on Friday 17 November 1978 at 8pm, and generated reactions ranging from bemusement to horror. Toy manufacturers Kenner, who had jumped at the chance of producing a new toyline based on Chewbacca's family, axed their plans soon after the broadcast and, unsurprisingly, the *Special* has never been re-broadcast or made commercially available.

"Most things are buried six feet under," says Daniels. "The *Holiday Special* is buried 20 miles under. If [Lucasfilm] had deep-down wit, they would go, 'Okay, here's the Special Edition of the *Holiday Special*.' Instead of making it a skeleton in the cupboard everyone's ashamed of, why not go, 'Okay, we blew it this time — why don't we see just how badly we blew it?'"

Initially, Lucasfilm maintained a wall of silence on the *Holiday Special* — it never appeared in official Lucas biogs — but over the years there seems to have been a slight thawing of the carbonite. A promotion for the *Robot Chicken Star Wars Special* saw an animated Lucas discuss his hatred for the *Holiday Special* in a psychoanalyst's chair, admitting that he might have done the same with the *Robot Chicken* experience — the doctor shakes his head and says, "Thirty years of therapy down the drain." That Lucas voiced the skit himself proves George can embrace the funny as well as the dark side of *Star Wars*' grandest folly.

"I'm sort of amused by it, because it is so bizarre," he laughed. "It's definitely avant-garde television. It's definitely bad enough to be a classic."



Clockwise from top left: Malla moons over Chewie's holopic; Leia and C-3PO at Rebel base; A heavily made-up Hamill, post-car accident; Harvey Korman as trader Saun Dann, mentoring Lumpy.

"Most things are buried six feet under. The *Star Wars Holiday Special* is buried 20 miles under."

Anthony Daniels

WOOKIEE ERRORS

A MOMENT-BY-MOMENT GUIDE TO THE *STAR WARS HOLIDAY SPECIAL*, AS ENDURED BY THE TEAM

00:00: We kick off with stock footage of the Millennium Falcon and Imperial spaceships, intercut with Han and Chewie in the cockpit. Chewie's trying to get home for Life Day. The jump to lightspeed segues into the titles.

03:16: We come back to a Ralph McQuarrie illustration of Chewbacca's family treehouse. Inside, Chewie's wife Malla is in the kitchen, his father Itchy is whittling a toy X-Wing and his son Lumpy is running around. The action is played out with grunts but no subtitles.

06:47: Still grunting. Still no subtitles.

07:02: To calm the hyperactive Lumpy, Itchy digs out a holoprojector and beams a circus act onto the table.

11:22: Malla contacts Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill, under a ton of make-up to hide the scars from a recent car accident). Luke says Chewie will be home soon.

15:25: We leave the Wookiee residence to join a Kashyyyk trading post run by Saun Dann (the always-likeable Art Carney), who is trying to flog gadgets to an Imperial officer.

18:50: An outtake from *Star Wars* sees Darth Vader walking through the Death Star discussing the Rebels. Wait, wasn't the Death Star destroyed?

19:30: Malla starts watching a cookery TV show featuring four-armed chef Gormaanda (Harvey Korman).

25:19: In an attempt to ramp up the dramatic tension, the Empire declares martial law. The Wookiees go apeshit but are calmed by the arrival of Saun Dann armed with presents. Then begins the *Holiday Special*'s most infamous set-piece: out of a swirl of '70s video effects, a husky female voice whispers, "I exist for you alone." Actor/singer Diahann Carroll emerges crooning, "You see, I am your fantasy, your experience/ So experience me. I am your pleasure. Enjoy me." It's an objectionable scene, but it also doesn't work narratively: how worried can Itchy be about his son if he is happy to bliss out to a woman with bad hair?

35:33: Malla calls Princess Leia (Carrie Fisher) and C-3PO (Anthony Daniels).

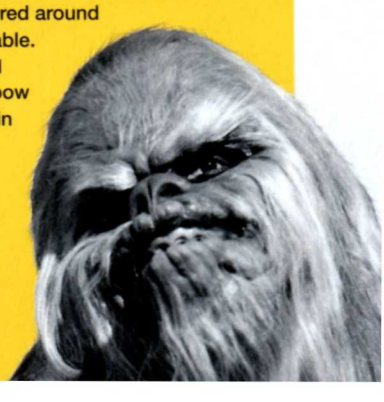
42:45: Without warning, stormtroopers invade the treehouse. To try and calm the situation down, Saun Dann brings out what looks like a ghettoblaster with sewing-machine knobs. After twiddling a few, Jefferson Starship appear singing *Light The Sky On Fire*.

48:00: Saun Dann leaves and the Imperials' search for signs of Rebel activity continues. Lumpy finds himself a video screen and watches a cartoon. This is the highlight of the entire *Special*, because it features the very first appearance of Boba Fett.

01:07:20: Following another astonishingly unfunny skit involving Harvey Korman as a malfunctioning robot in an informercial, the TV cuts to 'Life On Tatooine' (outtakes from *A New Hope*), an Imperial propaganda piece. Inside the Cantina, barkeep Ackmena (Bea Arthur, later the gravel-pit-voiced one on *The Golden Girls*) is schmoozing with Hammerheads and Walrus Men before bursting into song — a lament to the pangs of last orders.

01:20:00: Finding nothing incriminating in the Wookiee residence, the Empire departs, leaving one guard behind. Not before time, Han and Chewie turn up, dispatch the soldier and engage in cringeworthy banter, before Han retires. After all this, the celebration turns out to be a damp squib. Ascending to some kind of astral dimension, the Wookiees march into a ceremony hall carrying big light bulbs. It's a piss-poor turn-out — about 12 Wookiees and Leia singing *The Life Day Song*, a hymn to the sacred day itself, set badly to John Williams' *Star Wars* theme: "A day that brings the promise that one day we'll be free to live, to laugh, to dream, to grow, to trust, to love, to be." In short, a day designed solely to celebrate another day. Brilliant.

01:32:20: A dissolve from Leia to Chewie segues into a montage of clips from *Star Wars*. We return to the Wookiee home with the whole family gathered around the dining table. As they hold hands and bow their heads in respectful silence, the show mercifully draws to a close.



Taking *Courage*: Cindel (Aubree Miller), Mace (Eric Walker) and Wicket (Warwick Davis)

ENDOR'S GAME

In 2015, buoyed by the announcement of *Star Wars* anthology film *Rogue One*, *Empire* revisited the saga's original spin-offs

WORDS **OWEN WILLIAMS**

FAR OUT IN the unknown regions of the Moddell Sector of the Outer Rim Territories lies a small, unregarded green moon. Its inhabitants refer to it by any one of a number of bizarre chirps, squeaks or roars, but to the rest of the us it's known as Endor. A long time ago (1983, in fact) it was an outpost of the Empire: the construction base for the second Death Star, which the Rebellion destroyed before its completion in *Return Of The Jedi*. But *Star Wars*' sixth episode wasn't our only trip to the verdant home of the Ewoks. Even disregarding the further adventures detailed in *Star Wars*' 'Expanded Universe' of novels, comics, games and animations, we revisited in 1984 and 1985.

J.J. Abrams' *The Force Awakens* heralds a new *Star Wars* era in which the numbered episodes will alternate with standalone spin-off adventures, making for a film per year. But the Ewok adventures *Caravan Of Courage* and *The Battle For Endor* demonstrate that the side stories are hardly a new idea. Made to capitalise on the popularity of the warrior teddy bears among *Star Wars*' younger fans, they were also a gift from George Lucas to his young daughter, Amanda. Conceived as 'The Ewok Holiday Special', the first of the films soon found its name changed to avoid any sort of link with the infamous *Star Wars Holiday Special* of 1978. It also grew in the telling, expanding from an hour to feature-length. Its focus was the early-teen Mace Towani (Eric Walker) and his little sister Cindel (Aubree Miller), as they joined Wicket (Warwick Davis) and his fuzzy Bright Tree Village companions on a quest to rescue the Towani parents (Fionnula Flanagan and Guy Boyd) from the clutches of the monstrous Gorax. In the second film, both parents and Mace are killed early, leaving Cindel alone with the bears, some evil Sanyassan Marauders, and an irascible hermit played by Wilford Brimley.

ORIGINALLY APPEARED IN **EMPIRE NO.315 SEPTEMBER 2015**

Miller remembers little of the experience; understandably, since she was only four at the time. For Walker, however, the *Star Wars* franchise's first Mace, 15 years before Samuel L. Jackson's, it remains the role of a lifetime, despite his having discovered the films relatively late. "I wasn't really a *Star Wars* kid," he says. "I didn't have *Star Wars* toys, although George sent me a lot as Christmas presents subsequently. I would've been about seven when *Star Wars* came out, but I was not really going to movies until *Return Of The Jedi*. I saw that one about ten times."

Walker was initially unaware he was auditioning for George Lucas. An interview with the casting team led to an on-camera try-out, "but it wasn't until the final screen test that I realised what the film was," he laughs. "They brought out an Ewok attached to a stick — it didn't have an actor in it — to see if Aubree would be afraid of it, but she thought it was cute and hugged it. So they didn't have a problem there."

Lucas came up with *Caravan Of Courage*'s story, with screenplay duties going to Bob Carrau, at the time working for Lucas as Amanda's nanny. The director was John Korty, a veteran filmmaker and animator who'd been an influence on both Lucas and Francis Ford Coppola, and for a time rented space at Coppola's American Zoetrope. Several of the rest of the crew — production designer Joe Johnston, special effects artist Phil Tippett, many of the Ewoks themselves — came straight from *Return Of The Jedi*. The redwood forests around Lucas' Skywalker Ranch in Marin County, California, again played the part of Endor. Filming was relatively straightforward, barring some tweaks to the script to soften Walker's character. "He was way meaner as written," Walker says, explaining why Mace is introduced as a problem child, but for the most part ›

seems perfectly reasonable. Walker got to wear a Luke Skywalker-style orange flight suit and crash into the Ewoks' hut wielding a blaster, an experience he describes as "awesome".

When Korty's prior commitments made him unavailable for re-shoots, Lucas stepped in at the end for a week of filming at the end of the schedule. "A lot of people don't realise that," Walker says. "The official line is that George didn't direct after *Star Wars* until *The Phantom Menace*, but that's not quite true." The re-mounted scenes included one in which Mace is trapped underwater ("Pounding on a sheet of Plexiglas!"), and another where his hand is bitten when he sticks it into a tree. In the original version his assailant was a flower, but in the new scene it became a creature: the same puppet used in *The Empire Strikes Back* for the giant asteroid worm.

Caravan Of Courage premiered on US television on 25 November 25 1984 (and was released theatrically in several countries thereafter). *Star Wars* fans anticipating a grand new adventure were disappointed by the kid-friendly tone and slow, episodic pace, with sentimental narration by the singer Burl Ives papering over the narrative cracks. Nevertheless, it was an enormous success, pulling in an astonishing 65 million viewers and gaining Emmy nominations for Outstanding Children's Programming and Outstanding Special Visual Effects. It won the latter. Arriving in the early days of VHS, it was one of the first massively home-recorded events in TV history. A follow-up was inevitable, and the slightly more uptempo *The Battle For Endor* was broadcast a year later.

THE BATTLE FOR *Endor*'s story came from brainstorming sessions between Lucas, Johnston, Tippett and writer-directors Ken and Jim Wheat: Lucas protégés who would originate the Riddick franchise with *Pitch Black*. Since Amanda Lucas had been distraught at the death of Chukha-Trok in the first film, no Ewoks would be offed this time, although the Towanis were fair game, much to Walker's disappointment. He returned for a single scene, battling Marauders until he's blown up.

During the writing and designing process, Joe Johnston provided Lucas with three rubber stamps: "Great", "CBB" (could be better) and "86" (to nix). "He was like a kid with a new toy when he saw those," Ken Wheat later recalled. "There was no way anybody could ever be confused about his choices."

The eventual story saw the orphaned Cindel (Miller again) and Wicket (Davis again) forming an uneasy new family unit with the crashed and stranded spacefarer Noa (Wilford Brimley).

The hulking Marauder antagonists, lead by Carel Struycken (aka *The Addams Family* movies' Lurch) in Grinch-esque prosthetics, are looking to harness the power of a unit from Noa's old ship, which they believe is a magical artefact. Siân Phillips plays a Nightsister who can turn into a crow with the aid of a magic ring.

Ken Wheat recalled the experience as "more like play than work", but did concede a period when "things got completely crazy". This is a veiled reference to problems caused on set by Brimley, who railed against acting with puppets; dubbed the Wheats "the Idiot Brothers"; and refused to be directed by anyone other than Joe Johnston, still on board as production designer.

Clockwise from bottom left: The films' posters; A peek at *The Battle For Endor*'s Teek; Cindel, Mace and Logray with the magical crystal image spinner; Wicket comforts Cindel.

"The Wheats would have to discuss what they wanted with Joe," says cinematographer Isidore Mankofsky, "and then hide behind a set or around a corner while Joe directed Wilford." The character of Teek, a speedy, buck-toothed Endor creature who lives with Noa and gets on his nerves, was hurriedly re-worked to be played by actress Niki Botelho rather than puppeteers. But Teek and Noa rarely share the same frame in the finished film. Some shots during the castle sequences, where Brimley's face is obscured, indicate use of a body-double. Mankofsky maintains that it is always Brimley: those were simply the days when he was being especially cantankerous, refusing to even lift his head or hat brim for the camera.

"I never did find out what was between him and the Wheats," Mankofsky says. "They were new directors, but they were good."

"It might have had to do with Wilford just wanting to work with Joe Johnston, who everybody knew was George's heir apparent," unit production manager Frank Simeone muses. "But Joe didn't like being brought into this drama. He was minding his own business."

Far from having Lucas on hand for reshoots, the production had a directive not to bother its overseer with any day-to-day problems. "He had a few months where he'd decided he was going to just chill and race cars," says Simeone. "But when Wilford started acting out we had to bring that to George's attention, and George and [producer] Thomas G. Smith read Wilford the law. From then on he behaved."

In Brimley's defence, Walker recalls Brimley taking all the children (principals and stand-ins) for dinner and to the premiere of *Cocoon*. So he wasn't grumpy all the time. *The Battle For Endor*, however, played to a smaller television audience than *Caravan Of Courage*, and while the actors' contracts had been drawn up for a trilogy, a third film never materialised. We last see Cindel and Noa flying off in his repaired ship, but Brimley, probably to his relief, wasn't required for further adventures.

"Officially, George didn't direct after *Star Wars* until *The Phantom Menace*, but that's not quite true." **Eric Walker**

POSTERITY HAS NOT been kind to the Ewok films. Their television roots obviously render them smaller-scale affairs, but *The Battle For Endor*, in particular, compares favourably to Lucasfilm's theatrical *Willow*, released three years later. And it's a lot better than *Howard The Duck*. What's odd about both films, however, is that they don't feel very much like *Star Wars*. The magic and mysticism of this Endor feels at odds with the rest of the universe; even one where the Force is at play. There's none of the films' iconic sound design, and the production design contains little that's familiar, bar some contraptions, the odd costume and weapon, and some creatures in the second film that look like Dewbacks.

There's confusion over when the films are even set. Walker says that, during production, the understanding was that they're more than a century on from *Return Of The Jedi*: Ewoks are long-lived! That makes sense of Wicket's ability to speak English (or 'Basic' in *Star Wars* parlance) and his interest in "Star Cruiser!": something he would remember from his youth. But later official edicts have placed the two films between *Episodes V* and *VI*. Michael P. Kube-McDowell's novel *Tyrant's Test*, set just a decade or so after *Jedi*, contains a brief mention of Cindel, and reveals she grew up to be a journalist on Coruscant. It's the Expanded Universe's sole callback to either of the TV movies.

The Ewok adventures have only received a single bare-bones DVD release, long out of print. These days, they're barely even considered canon. "It's a shame, those films had heart," shrugs Walker. "I still meet and talk to people that like *Caravan* and *The Battle* and remember them fondly from their childhoods. Other people don't like them because they don't like the Ewoks. There are a lot of Ewok haters out there. But we weren't as bad as Jar Jar!"

WHAT THE PREQUELS DID FOR US*

The *Star Wars* prequels are seen as a shameful low-point. But is that fair? *Empire* contributing editor Ian Freer argues the case for the defence

WHEN HE WAS asked how he would have made the *Star Wars* prequels, writer-director-*Star Wars* nerd extraordinaire Kevin Smith had a simple response.

"I would have done it exactly as George Lucas did it," he replied. "I hear people say, 'George Lucas raped my childhood.' He built my childhood. It's his universe. Let him do what he wants to do. I thought that trilogy was wonderful."

It's been 12 years since *Revenge Of The Sith* closed out the Prequel Trilogy and the most pervasive pop-culture conversation of the past two decades rages on. Since the release of *Episode VII*, their reputation, like Darth Maul falling down the reactor shaft, has plummeted even further. In the razzle-dazzle of the Abrams-minted universe, apologists who once defended their merits have now given up the Force ghost. Perhaps even more than *The Star Wars Holiday Special* (which has a certain kitsch appeal), they are perceived as the apotheosis of Lucas-sponsored naff, an object lesson in how to get *Star Wars* spectacularly wrong.

"Lucas knew exactly what he was doing," counters Kyle Newman, director of *Fanboys*, a comedy about kids desperate to see *Episode I*. "But at the time we were like, 'Oh wow, *The Matrix*.' It's us wanting them to have aged with

* IT'S NOT ALL BAD!

us. George put his cap on and said, 'I am making a movie for everyone.'"

Few are denying the Prequels have flaws; clunky dialogue ("I don't like sand"), bad ideas (midi-chlorians), embarrassing moments (death sticks, space cows) and, of course, the misjudged, politically dubious Jar Jar, a kind of whipping Gungan for everything that fans felt was wrong with the series: too much CGI, childish, not cool. But to overlook both the qualities, impact and influence of the Prequels — especially the much derided *Episode I* — is to do Lucas a disservice. They might not make your top ten, but *Episodes I* to *III* have merits, and shaped the movies you have watched ever since.

These days, only auteurs — Spielberg, Nolan, the Coens — have the clout to shoot on film, the rest of the industry transitioning to high def digital video. But back in 2002, Lucas' decision to shoot *Episode II* on the CineAlta HDW-F900 digital camera was groundbreaking. He shot a small number of shots digitally in *The Phantom Menace* — one of the shots is believed to be Qui-Gon and Obi-Wan discussing Anakin's age in Coruscant — then committed to a full feature. The upsides were obvious — going from 35mm film to digital for effects work then back to 35mm film was cumbersome and expensive — but, being a step into the unknown, it was still a huge risk. On top of this, *Episode I*'s editing processes — using digital technology to cut and paste actors into different shots — were also revolutionary, fundamentally changing the ways movies were put together.

Equally innovative was the Prequels' approach to visual effects. They broke new VFX ground in incalculable ways, from *Episode I*'s digital set extensions and new cloth simulation software for digital characters, to *Episode II*'s pioneering use of CG stunt doubles (see the Obi-Wan-Jango fight). Even bigger strides were made in CG backgrounds. The desert Podracing track in *Episode I* was created by projection mapping techniques, applying photos and paintings to 3D geometry. The upshot of this meant the camera, previously hampered by the limitations of matte paintings, could fly, following Anakin's Podracer into the sky and down again.

Yet the biggest impact on visual effects was Jar Jar Binks. Initially designed to be a CG, animated head grafted onto actor Ahmed Best's body, *Star Wars*' most famous J.J. (sorry, Mr Abrams) became the most complex and prominently featured CG character realised to date. Industrial Light & Magic overhauled Caricature, a character animation software, to create Jar Jar's facial expressions and lip-sync (the latter tricky due to his duck bill), and revamped Carienv — an interface which defines the way body joints react underneath skin. Using Best's performance as a basis for 90 per cent of the animation (the rest was pure CGI), the team established a pipeline and methodology that has become the basis for digital characters ever since, from *Avatar* to Robert Zemeckis' performance capture work and, of course, Gollum. "What I appreciate is that Gollum only exists because of the efforts made with Jar Jar Binks," says Weta Workshop's Richard Taylor. "It is so easy for people to be critical of a CG character, but our work was built on the backs of that work."

Interestingly *The Phantom Menace* lost the Visual Effects Oscar to *The Matrix* (the first *Star Wars* film not to win the VFX Oscar), but Lucas' approach has enjoyed more staying power. You can debate the merits of the influence, but the Prequels' more-is-more, digital-heavy approach is the touchstone for the modern blockbuster. The Gungan versus battle droid showdown at the end of *Episode I* is a clear forerunner for the massed armies of *The Lord Of The Rings*. Perhaps even more influential is the Geonosis set-piece at the end of *Clones*. From *Alice In Wonderland* to the MCU, the way blockbusters end these days — full-on CGI fests with every bit of the frame filled — can be traced back to the *Episode II* finale.

From left: Qui-Gon Jinn (Liam Neeson), young Anakin Skywalker (Jake Lloyd), Jar Jar Binks (Ahmed Best), Darth Maul (Ray Park), Padmé Amidala (Natalie Portman) and Yoda (voice Frank Oz).

If the Prequels altered the movie industry landscape, they also changed the face of *Star Wars* itself. In fact, it is not too much of a stretch to say the Prequels saved *Star Wars*. In the mid-'90s, the series was careering towards cult status, hardcore fans subsisting on a diet of novels, video games and action-figure lines. It took the release of the Special Editions in 1997 to reawaken the love and catapult it back into the mainstream. But the Special Editions only existed because of the Prequels. In bringing the Original Trilogy (OT) up to his initial vision, Lucas was partly testing the ways in which digital technology could be applied to the *Star Wars* universe before embarking on *Episode I* and partly sprucing the 20-year-old trilogy up to a level where it could live alongside new films as a six-part series. No Prequels, no Special Editions. No Special Editions and *Star Wars* could be residing in the corner of niche sci-fi fandom right next to *Stargate*.

The Prequels have also provided compelling source material for the franchise's spin-offs. *Attack Of The Clones* served as the impetus for three seasons of *Star Wars: Clone Wars* and six seasons of *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*, paving the way for *Star Wars Rebels*. In between the Prequels and *Episode VII*, these shows played a vital role in weaning new generations of fans, making possible the current nirvana of One *Star Wars* Film Every Year we are now living through. It's also easy to forget that a lot of the key tenets that now inform *Star Wars* were enshrined in the Prequels, not the Original Trilogy; "Always two there are, no more, no less, a master and an apprentice" — Prequels. The Chosen One — Prequels. Balance of the Force — Prequels. When Rey, in *The Last Jedi* teaser trailer, says, "light... darkness... balance", she is riffing on a Prequels idea. Look inside yourself. You know it to be true.

Lucas imbues the Prequels with bold ideas — he dares to carry off a virgin birth — and audacious storytelling. As *Star Wars* scholar Mike Klimo and others have argued, the Prequels are adroitly assembled to include an inter-connected nexus of allusions and 'rhymes' with the OT, with *Episode I* mirroring *Episode VI*, *Episode II* paralleling *Episode V* and *Episode III* chiming with *Episode IV*. Known as the *Star Wars* Ring Theory, it cites a multitude of links between the films (in *Episodes II* and *V*, Anakin and Luke are both haunted by visions) that deepen our understanding and emotional relationship with the story. For instance, when Luke leaves Dagobah to save his friends in *Jedi*, it has more significance because we understand that Obi-Wan and Yoda know his father, Anakin, broke ranks to help his mother and Obi-Wan in *Clones*. Drawing on centuries of ancient storytelling and mythological patterns, it appears Lucas didn't just throw this shit together.

As a showman, Lucas showed both great integrity in sticking to his original instincts and admirable restraint in not rushing to the familiar just to appease the fanbase. "Our nostalgia, our desire, says, 'Where is my Han Solo?'" believes Newman. "Han Solo is a voice of nihilism. He is a by-product of Imperial

"Our generation had Ewoks. Their generation had Jar Jar. Every generation has their cross to bear in a *Star Wars* trilogy."

Kevin Smith

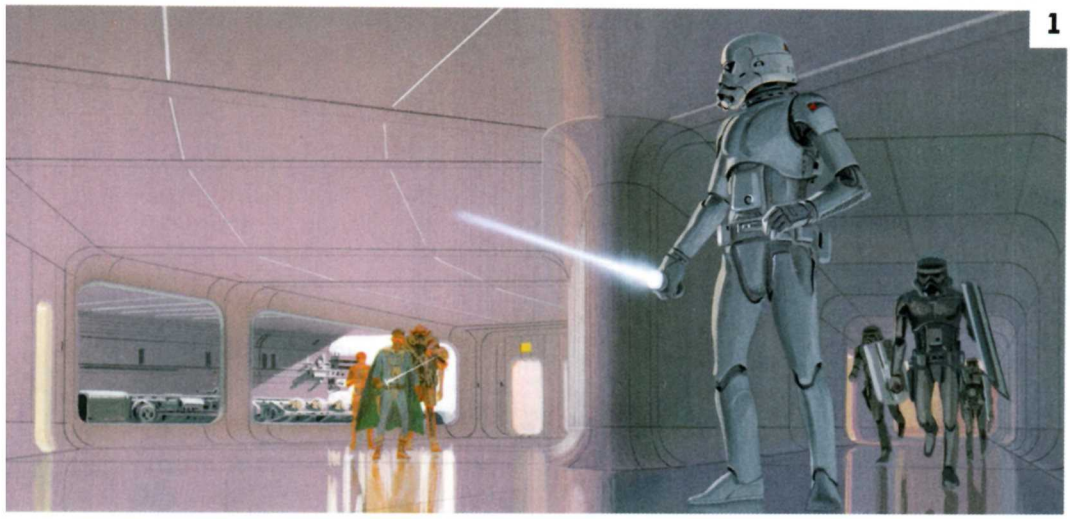
From left: Young Obi-Wan Kenobi (Ewan McGregor), General Grievous (voice Matthew Wood), Mace Windu (Samuel L. Jackson), Emperor Palpatine (Ian McDiarmid) and adult Anakin Skywalker (Hayden Christensen).

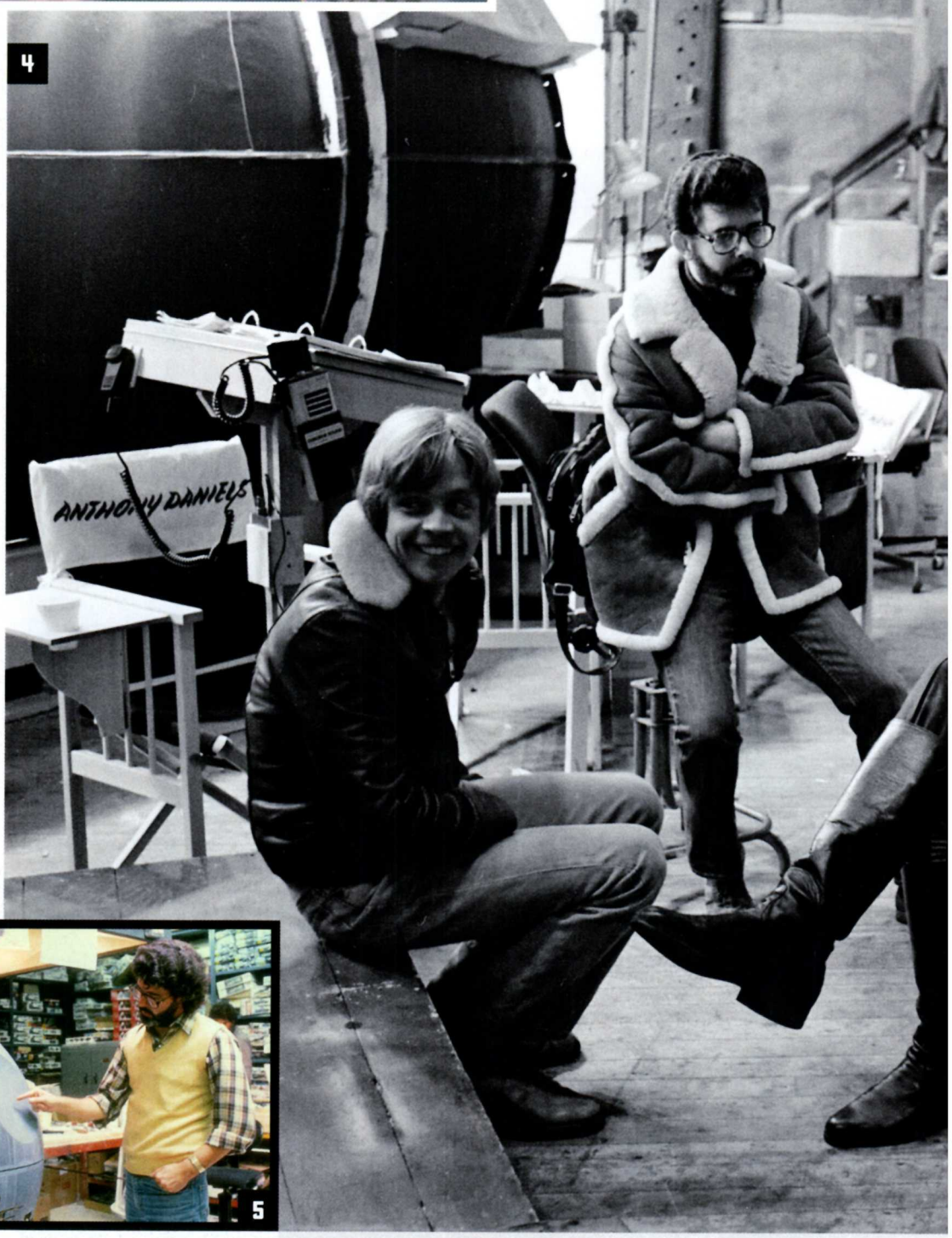
repression — that is why he is the way he is. He is a jaded voice so you needed to go through three films to show what the galaxy was like to create a Han Solo. There is a supreme logic Lucas adhered to."

This philosophy also runs to the look of the film. The galaxy has yet to go through the Empire's reign, so Lucas smartly eschewed the OT's trademark lived-in aesthetic for a bold, beautiful opulent look that pulls influences as diverse as Venetian architecture to Art Nouveau, filtered through Ralph McQuarrie. Lucas envisioned different droids ("Roger Roger"), new vehicles (Dooku's solar sailer) and spectacular worlds, from the pastoral Naboo, to the rain-swept Kamino, to the volcanic Mustafar, to the underwater city of Otoh Gunga. As James Cameron has noted about *The Force Awakens*, "I have to say that I felt George's group of six films had more innovative visual imagination, and this film [*The Force Awakens*] was more of a retrenchment to things you had seen before. So for me the jury's out — I want to see where they go with it."

For all the Prequels' problems, all three films have moments, sequences and elements that linger in the memory. Even naysayers agree the Qui-Gon-Obi-Wan-Maul lightsaber duel is among the best in the series, a beautifully balletic depiction of Jedi in their prime. Ian McDiarmid's Palpatine is a strong performance in any film, not just a *Star Wars* film. There are memorable set-pieces (Order 66, the extermination of the Jedi, in *Sith* is brutal) and the experimental filmmaking so beloved by Lucas as a student is effective: the start of the Obi-Wan-Dooku lightsaber fight in *Clones* is a striking Expressionist use of colour. John Williams' work across the three films is stunning, from Anakin's theme with subtle hints of Vader's March, to *Episode II*'s aching love theme, to *Duel Of The Fates*, a choral masterwork to stand alongside anything in the OT. There's also — say it quietly — good dialogue: Padmé's, "So this is how liberty dies, with thunderous applause," is exquisitely pointed.

Of course there is now a grown-up generation for whom *Star Wars* began with and *is* the Prequels. "Our generation had Ewoks. Their generation had Jar Jar," Kevin Smith once joked. "Every generation has their cross to bear in the trilogy." Yet they are already finding ways to express their hate/love relationship, rescuing the Prequels from ignominy. For instance, the subreddit prequelmemes has 342,021 subscribers (bigger than the Christianity subreddit) and uses the political threads of the films — a republic that becomes a dictatorship — to comment on the current US status quo while also quoting obscure lines and celebrating third-fiddle Jedi (Yarael Poof). It acknowledges the bad in the Prequels but with fun and love. Which might be the best position for a *Star Wars* fan to take when approaching the Prequels. A Jedi might call it balance.





1. Early *Star Wars* concept art by Ralph McQuarrie. Note the stormtrooper's lightsaber — only later would they become exclusive to the Jedi.

2. Lucas, cast and crew prep *A New Hope*'s Rebel assault on Yavin IV.

3. Artist Alex Tavoularis' conceptual storyboards for *ANH*.

4. Mark Hamill, Lucas, Carrie Fisher and Harrison Ford relax on the Elstree set of *The Empire Strikes Back*.

5. George Lucas examines the second Death Star on *Return Of The Jedi*.

6. The earliest iteration of the *Star Wars* crawl. Note the later discarded "The".

7. Luke and Vader mid (pre-FX) duel on *The Empire Strikes Back*.

FROM THE JEDI ARCHIVES

Empire explores the Lucasfilm vaults to bring you magic moments from the making of the Original Trilogy

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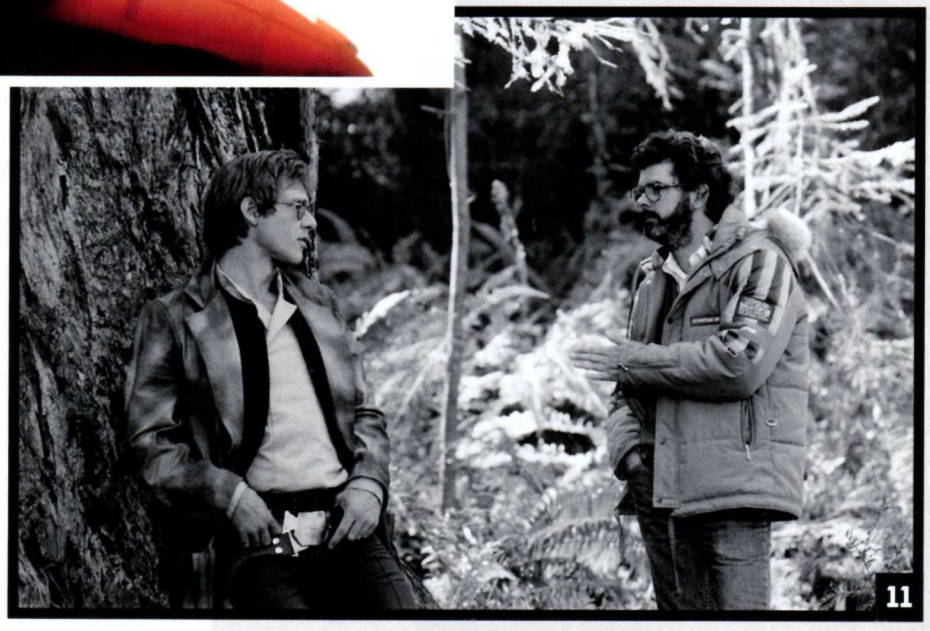

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8. Crafting *The Empire Strikes Back*'s Twin-Pod Cloud Car model.

9. Hamill and Alec Guinness in the Jundland Wastes (actually Tunisia). Not to be travelled lightly.

10. Early concept art for Chewbacca.

11. Ford and Lucas chat on Endor — in real life the Redwood National And State Parks, California — while making *Return Of The Jedi*.

12. Guinness confers with Lucas in the Death Star Hangar Bay.

13. Ralph McQuarrie artwork depicting Vader's Bespin reveal in *Empire*. "We would be honoured if you would join us."

14. Lucas demonstrates the finer points of blaster-handling in *A New Hope*'s pre-Luke/Leia swinging scene.

15. Hamill in the cockpit of his snowspeeder during the Hoth section of *Episode V*.

FAREWELL CARRIE

Empire salutes Carrie Fisher: writer, activist and our one and only Princess Leia

Above: Steve Pyke's photographs of Carrie Fisher fooling around in the Halcyon hotel's lift, in Holland Park, London, on 18 April 1994.

CARRIE FISHER WAS a cinematic icon. It was, in many respects, her destiny. A destiny made real by her role as Rebel leader Princess Leia Organa in *Star Wars*. "In the street they call out, 'Hey, Princess!', which makes me feel like a poodle,'" she said later with her trademark, heartwarming wit.

These images from *Empire*'s archive were taken by photographer Steve Pyke in 1994, just moments after our official shoot wrapped in West London's Halcyon hotel. "It was just me and her in this claustrophobic space," he remembers of climbing into the hotel's tiny lift. "It was really interesting with all the mirrors... I just let her do her own thing and as she was looking in the mirror, she leaned forward and kissed herself. It was a very soft, spontaneous moment."

The pictures come with an extra chest-clutching pang of poignancy as we await *The Last Jedi,* Fisher's final film. It's also Princess Leia's — Disney confirming there would be no CG return. And though it'll be sad to say farewell, we know the time has come. And there's arguably no better way than with the "soft, spontaneous" moment we were lucky enough to capture.

Thanks for the memories, thanks for the laughs. And those we're still yet to have. We'll never forget you.

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